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VOLUME II







DOCUMENTS OF  
THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT  
IN INDIA



# DOCUMENTS OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA



VOL. III

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## Task of the Left-Wing Trade Unions of India

**Abdul Halim,  
Acting General Secretary of Workers' & Peasants' Party  
of India (Bengal Provincial Branch)**

*(No one acquainted with conditions in India can deny that the very air is electric with revolution against British Imperialism. The following analysis correctly estimates the forces at work, and outlines the tasks of the Left-Wing trade unions of India, on which falls the principal burden of leadership in the struggle which will profoundly affect the whole world and certainly the workers of the Pacific area. It is, therefore, important that all adherents of the P.P.T.U.S. familiarize themselves with the following estimation of the task of the Left-Wing unions of India, which (estimate) will undoubtedly deeply influence future struggles.)*

I. The present economic and political situation in India is characterised by an ever-sharpening development of the class-struggle. The ruthless oppression by British Imperialism, the intensified exploitation by British and Indian capital, the appalling working conditions and unemployment have brought about strong resistance on the part of the working class of India. A new period in the national revolutionary independence movement of India has begun. A period of broader, deeper and more determined than ever before working class struggles against British imperialist subjugation and capitalist exploitation. A period of anti-British imperial mass struggles in which the proletariat is the leading and deciding factor.

The present-day revolutionary struggles in India have found expression in the recent and last year strikes and mass demonstrations. The main characteristic features of these are as follows: (a) the strikes are taking place mostly in the textile mills,

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railway shops and metal works. The miners and plantation workers have not been affected by the strike wave while the transport workers were partly involved. However, since last summer the present strike wave has risen higher than all the preceding ones in India. It now begins to spread to inland cities and the native States and to affect also the most remote and backward sections of the proletariat; (b) the strike committees are being elected by and from the rank and file or from the striking masses; (c) the strikes are greatly accelerating the differentiation in the labour movements as well as in the national independence movement; (d) the strikes gave birth to revolutionary trade unions (Girni Kamgar Union, etc.), stimulating their steady growth well as it inspired the rank and file with self-confidence and urged it on the independent working class action; (e) the strikes are of extremely long duration and are fought by the masses with steadfastness and great self-sacrifice. In these struggles the Bombay textile workers (Girni Kanigar Union) are the leading and most advanced section; (f) the strikes are being organized and led mostly by the Left-Wing trade unions and by the rank and file of the reformist trade unions apart from and against the will of the bureaucrats; there have been also spontaneous or the organized strikes; (g) the strikes are frequently lost. First of all, due to armed suppression by the British authorities; secondly, due to sabotage and treachery of the reformist; thirdly, because the strikes are not co-ordinated and extended in scope but rather remain isolated and confined to local battles; (h) the strikes begin mostly as economic fights, primarily against rationalisation enforcements, but nevertheless, they often assume a political character; last but not least, there have been also clear-cut political mass actions of great importance. Particularly the record protest strike against the arrests of the Left-Wing trade union leaders and the mass demonstrations in Bombay and Calcutta against the Simon Commission, etc.

II. The British Imperialist, alarmed by the rapid revolutionization process of the Indian proletariat, the low but sure awakening of the peasantry, resulting in a low rising wave of the national revolutionary movement in India, have launched a campaign of white terror against the labour movement all over the country.



The streets of the industrial centres, especially in Bombay are deeply drenched with workers' blood. Hundreds of militants and Left-Wing trade unionists are thrown into prisons. The labour press has been suppressed. The offices of the Left-Wing trade unions and the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party have been ransacked. The strikes are being smashed by the military force and hundreds of strikers killed. Compulsory arbitration is being forced upon the workers, strikes of transport workers are outlawed. Likewise, solidarity and political strikes are forbidden. Financial assistance to Indian striking workers by the proletariat of other countries is not permitted. Foreign-born revolutionaries are deported. This is the practical meaning of the recently promulgated "Public Safety Ordinance" and Trade Disputes Act.

Further, armed clashes between the Moslems and the Hindoos or the massacres of one native group of people by other on religious grounds, are being systematically instigated and provoked by the British spies and police. At the same time, the British imperialist agents are trying to bribe and organize the Moslem workers as strike-breakers and play them against the Hindoo workers in the class-struggle. All this is aimed at splitting the labour movement and stemming the revolutionary tide in India. The same bloody policies and massacres will continue to prevail during the present so-called Labour Government of Ramsay MacDonald, Tom Shaw, Henderson & Co., being lackeys of British Imperialism will be just as ruthless in crushing strikes, smashing revolutionary labour organisations and arresting militant workers as were the Tories with Baldwin and Chamberlain at the head.

### **Native Capitalist Betrayal**

1. The nationalist bourgeoisie menaced by the "red spectre" of the national revolutionary independence movement, by the rapidly approaching wave of the Indian national revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat are deserting and betraying the struggles for national independence. The nationalist bourgeoisie have accepted the scheme of the "Dominion Status for India", and are compromising most shamelessly with the British imperialists at every turn and occasion.

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II. Furthermore, the national bourgeoisie, if they are not officially fostering and openly calling for the white terror of British Imperialism, yet are not fighting against it. In fact, the native bourgeoisie in supporting the enactment of the "Trade Disputes Bill" practically have helped to pave the way for the reign of British imperialist terror. Likewise, its lukewarm attitude and passivity in the face of the present offensive of British Imperialism is nothing but additional link in the long chain of treacherous actions which points to the passing over of the national bourgeoisie to a position of counter-revolution.

III. The brutal oppression of the 'toiling masses by the British Imperialism, the rationalisation drive of British and Indian capital, the throwing out of work of hundreds of thousands of proletarians, and the rising of revolutionary spirit and fighting endurance among the toiling masses has resulted in a general sharpening of the class-struggle. This, in its turn, has brought about an intensified vacillating policies and half-measure activities within the ranks of the "Left" nationalists, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Chaman Lal etc, the agents of the nationalist bourgeoisie in the labour movement, and to a whole line of class collaboration and social-imperialist actions by the trade union bureaucrats of N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao, Bakhale & Co. the agents of the British Imperialism.

Thus N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao. Bakhale & Co. are sparing no efforts to prevent strikes against the British as well as against the native exploiters. They are sabotaging the strikes and trying to persuade the workers to enter upon, the road of compulsory arbitration and class collaboration. In addition to this N.M. Joshi, Kirk, Shiva Rao, etc. are campaigning for the expulsion of the Left-Wingers from "their" trade unions consciously splitting and weakening the fighting forces of the Indian proletariat. They, in unison with British Imperialists, and their agency—the General Council of the British T.U. Congress—are striving for annihilation of the Indian Left-Wing trade unions and revolutionary political organisations. Moreover, N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao & Co. are not only "working hard" to smash the militant labour and peasant organisations in India, but are even making an attempt to disrupt

the united front of the trade unions in the whole of the Far East.

### **The Reformists and the P. P. T. U. S.**

In close co-operation with Bunji Suzuki (social-imperialist in Japan), Albert Thomas, and other lackeys of Imperialism, they are scheming to undermine the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. They are calling in opposition to the P.P.T.U.S. an "Asiatic Labour Conference" in Bombay next year. The Indian reformists, the Japanese social-imperialists, the Chinese counter-revolutionists, etc, are feeling keenly the spreading influence of the P.P.T.U.S. and the R.I.L.U. in the trade union movement in their respective countries.

The reformists of all shades know well that an affiliation to the P.P.T.U.S. means the intensification of the class-struggle, the co-ordination and strengthening of the trade unions on the Pacific, the tremendous advancement of the national revolutionary movement. Consequently, this means a counter-attack against Imperialism, capitalist exploitation, and the throwing into oblivion of the reformists. Hence, the calling of an "Asiatic Labour Conference" for the establishment of a social-reformists or counter-revolutionary "Labour" Centre in the Far East. Hence, the welcome of the British Imperialists to such a "Labour" Conference in India. Hence, the blessings of the Geneva "Labour Office" the General Council of the British Trade Union Conference, the Amsterdam International and other agencies of the bourgeoisie. This also explain why the General Council of British Trade Union dares to attack and slander so viciously the striking and suffering textile workers of Bombay.

Although Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Chaman Lal, etc. do not sabotage strikes taking place in the British-owned factories and enterprises, they, however, do everything possible to prevent strikes in the textiles mills, metal works, etc. controlled by Indian capital. This was particularly evident during the strike of the metal workers of Jamshedpur last year. Therefore, wherever British imperialist domination and foreign capitalist competition to the national bourgeoisie is taking place Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, etc, are not in opposition to strikes. Of course, not for the

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benefit of the workers' interests but that of the national bourgeoisie. But insofar as the national bourgeoisie or Indian capitalist exploitation is concerned, Nehru, Bose, etc., are calling upon the workers to submit and not to strike.

Moreover, time and again, the reformists of all shades (from N.M.Joshi to Jawaharlal Nehru) have been co-operating against the Left-Wing trade unions. This was glaringly demonstrated by the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru undertook to run for the chairmanship of the All-India Trade Union Congress last year against the Left trade union candidate. And all owing to the support of N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao & Co., Jawaharlal Nehru was elected by a small majority. Undoubtedly, in the final analysis both types of reformist differ from each other mainly in phraseology but little in deeds.

It is also quite evident that Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Chaman Lal, etc., being the exponents of the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie within the labour movement, are hindering in every possible way the proletariat in its struggle for the hegemony of the national revolutionary independence movement of India.

### **Some Mistakes**

IV. Although the Left-Wingers proved to be brave fighters in the workers' struggles, have gained wide influence and confidence of the masses, have organized many revolutionary mass unions (Girni Kamgar, etc.) and factory committees, have led strikes and mass demonstrations, etc, nevertheless, they have committed mistakes some of which we should mention here.

First of all, the Left-Wing fails to draw a sufficiently sharp ideological line between itself and the nationalist reformists of the Jawaharlal Nehru type, thus failing to prove to the masses: (a) that the nationalist reformists are sacrificing the interests of the workers for the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie; (b) that they are co-operating with the Right-Wingers (N.M. Joshi, Shiva Rao & Co) in order to undermine and disrupt the Left-Wing trade unions; (c) that the nationalists reformists should be discarded; as labour leaders.

Secondly, owing to this ideological confusion our comrades do not always initiate and lead the mass struggles but rather find themselves at the tail-end of developments. Thus the great Indian Railway Strike was postponed, time and again, though the workers pressed for the strike call. A great Indian Railway Strike at that time, combined with the simultaneously going on strikes of the South Indian Railway and the Bombay Textile Workers' would have been a strike of far-reaching effect and consequences.

Thirdly, the application of the united front tactics by the Left-Wing in India was utterly wrong. For instance, during the Bombay textile strike last year the Left-Wing leaders, even though the striking workers were opposing it, agreed to form a strike committee with the Right-Wing bureaucrats on a fifty-fifty basis. Evidently, our comrades failed to grasp the significance that the united front must not be effected from the top but from below, namely, that real assistance to the striking textile workers can only be rendered by the rank and file of the trade unions, or the working masses in general. Our comrades failed to grasp sufficiently clear that no reformist leaders or bureaucrats should be tolerated in strike committees nor agreements should be signed jointly with them. The failure to emphasize that the united front must be effected from below and not from the top is also contained in the Trade Union Resolution adopted by the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party Conference in December, 1928.

### **Organisational Consolidation**

Fourthly, a no less serious shortcoming is that the Left-Wing does not always consolidate its ideological influence organisationally. Thus, the Left-Wing had strong influence in the Tata Steel Strike, the Lilloah Strike, etc., but failed to entrench itself organisationally with the result that the petty-bourgeois politicians and intellectuals are in control of the organisations.

Lastly, a still more serious shortcoming is that the Left-Wing trade unions are insufficiently co-ordinated and connected up under centralized leadership, and effective struggle against Imperialism and reformism is impossible.

Therefore, in view of the current situation, the most important

tasks of the Left-Wing trade unions in India are as follows:

A. The strikes must be better prepared for co-ordinated the wide masses attracted and direct leadership undertaken by the Left-Wing. Under no circumstances vacillating leaders and reformist or Right-Wing bureaucrats should be elected or tolerated in strike committees. The strike demands should be discussed and popularised among the masses. For the success of the strikes it is absolutely necessary that the unorganized masses, the workers in industries not yet or slightly affected by the strike wave, such as transport, mining, plantation workers, etc., should be more and more drawn into the strikes. The strikes must not be only widened in scope but also deepened in content.

### **Preparing Strike Action**

**“The general strike is an extremely powerful weapon, which the trade union movement must not shrink from using”** states correctly the Trade Union Resolution of the ‘All-India Workers’ and Peasants’ Party Conference of last year. However, in the propaganda for and preparation of the general strike the Left-Wing should formulate clear-cut demands and thoroughly explain to the masses that the general strike is a political strike—a revolutionary mass struggle. The leadership of the general strike must be entirely in the hands of the militant workers and the Left-Wing, and no reformist leaders (from Joshi to Jawaharlal Nehru) should be admitted in the leadership of the strike.

The central as well as the local strike committees must not attract but rather eject all vacillating elements from their ranks. The strike leadership should not lose initiative and should not drift into defensive position. The strike committees and the striking masses must not accept or believe the empty promises of the British Imperialist Government or its agents. Finally, in connection with the general strike propaganda and preparations the Left-Wing must remind & explain to the masses the treacherous action and role of the British reformists, the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress in the general strike of England, 1926.

B. The practice of electing large strike committees by the striking workers and their active participation in the conduct of

the strikes as for example, is being done by the Girni Kamgar, should be further encouraged, and large strike support committees of non-striking workers organized. The strike support committees should not limit themselves only to the collection of funds, but also it must make wide propaganda, arrange meetings and mass demonstrations for the support and encouragement of the strikers etc. The strike committees as well as the strike support committees should strive for contact with the peasants in order to obtain food supplies as well as to draw the peasants into the revolutionary struggles.

C. The defence groups already formed should be extended. Care against provocateurs should be exercised in the selection of the guards.

### **Organize the Unorganized**

D. No effort should be spared in organising the unorganised especially in the key industries. Steps should be taken to organise the young workers, and the women workers in the trade unions on an equal footing with adult and male workers. No less stress should be laid on the importance of organising trade unions for agricultural labourers and plantation workers.

E. The organisation of factory committees and shop-delegate conferences should be stressed more determinedly than hitherto. The factory committees and the shop delegate conferences should be co-ordinated and united under centralized leadership. The Left-Wing control of the factory committees and shop delegate conferences will accelerate the development of the everyday struggles as well as the struggles of a political nature. It will also create a broad and favourable basis for the growth of the Left-Wing trade unions.

F. The already existing Left-Wing trade unions, like the Girni Kamgar Union, though having developed from an organisation of 500 to 65,000 within a short space of time, should nevertheless be further expanded and consolidated organisationally and ideologically. A drive for increased membership of all Left-Wing trade unions should be carried on systematically and energetically. The Left-Wing, particularly during strikes and other mass activities,

should strive strenuously to crystallize its influence into definite organisation.

New unions should be set up where none exists, or where it is impossible to use the old unions because of completely reactionary control. It is also important that in all industrial towns Trade Councils should be established. At the same time the amalgamation of scattered or parallel trade unions into industrial unions under militant leadership must be pressed forward. However, in the campaign for trade union unity and industrial unionism the Left-Wing should emphasize that the unification should be based strictly upon working class basis and fight against reformism.

The recent amalgamation of the Jute Workers' Union of Bauria and the Jute Workers' Union of Bengal as well as the amalgamation of the two competing or parallel unions on the Great Indian Railway, is highly commendable indeed. Special attention should be paid without fail to the transport workers. It is particularly necessary to make timely preparations for the maturing railway workers' strike. It must be brought clearly before the masses that while at the present time the capitalists have centered the attack upon the textile workers, that, subsequently, the onslaught will be made upon the transport workers.

### **Workers' Democracy**

G. The old bureaucratic system of appointing functionaries, delegates, and other officials in the trade unions, should be done away with and substituted by workers' democracy—a system of election from and by the rank and file. It is of paramount importance that the bourgeois intellectuals, and politicians, occupying leading positions in the trade unions should be thrown overboard and in their stead militant workers elected. In addition to that the centre of gravity of the trade unions should be transferred to the factories, that the so-called residential branches of the trade unions (branches organized where the workers live but not where they work) should be reorganized upon shop and factory basis and inter-woven with the factory committees and shop delegate conference.

H. However, the organisation of new unions, etc., does not exclude, but rather calls for more intensified propaganda and



organisational activities of the Left-Wing within the reformist trade unions. The Left-Wingers must formulate strike and other demands for the rank and file and foster the fight for workers' democracy within the reformist trade unions. The Left-Wing should, above all, win over the masses. Nor does this mean that the Left-Wing should give up the fight within the All-India Trade Union Congress. On the contrary, our comrades should take up a much sterner attitude than was the case at the previous Annual Congress.

I. Without delay the Left-Wing should launch a systematic and persistent ideological campaign against social-reformism. The treacherous character of social-reformism must be exposed at every turn and occasion. Not less persistently and sharply the Left-Wing should criticise the nationalists-reformists like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, etc., as the exponents of the interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie within the labour movement, as absolutely unfit and unreliable elements to lead the labour movement. In this campaign we must not limit ourselves just to ideological criticism, but must also expose the reformist leaders before the masses by concrete facts. The united front proposals by the Left-Wing should be always directed to the rank and file of the reformist unions, in order to build up a solid united front from the bottom. Upon such a united front basis a nationwide campaign against class collaboration, the "Trade Disputes Bill", the "Public Safety Bill" as well as against the Whitley Commission, and against the mass arrests must be immediately intensified.

### **Expose Reformists**

J. The campaign against class collaboration and reformism should be interlocked with a sharp attack against the Ramsay MacDonald Government, against the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress, the Amsterdam International, the Geneva "Labour Office" and the "Asiatic Labour Conference" scheme. It is of paramount importance to persuade the working masses and peasants of India that no illusions should be entertained in regard to the MacDonald Cabinet. Ramsay MacDonald & Co. will at all times serve and preserve the interests of the United Kingdom or British Imperialism ruthlessly persecuting and aiming to destroy

the revolutionary independence movement of India. The so-called Labour Government will trample upon the sentiments and rights of the colonial peoples. It will, likewise, crush strikes as well as smash Left-Wing trade unions etc.

At the same time the fight against participation in the "Asiatic Labour Conference" is one of the Left-Wing's immediate tasks. Simultaneously the popularization of the programme and aims of the R. I. L. U. (Red International of Labour Unions) and the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat should be the order of the day, and immediate affiliation to the R. I. L.U. and the P.P.T.U.S. sought more energetically than ever before.

K. An educational campaign based upon the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the R. I. L. U. should be launched, the leading cadres of the Left-Wing increased and elevated ideologically. We should stress the necessity for the establishing of workers' schools, a Left-Wing press, and the publication of pamphlets, written specially for the Indian workers. In a word, a systematic and energetic training of workers for leadership is extremely essential.

L. It goes without saying that the Left-Wing cannot co-ordinate its activities and expand without having a consolidated organisation and an authoritative centre. Hence, the pressing need for an all-embracing Left Trade Union Conference. It is imperative, therefore, that some Left-Wing Trade Union Executive should undertake to call a preliminary conference composed of representatives of the largest Left-Wing trade unions to work out a plan for an all-embracing Left-Wing trade union conference, namely, a conference embracing the representative of all the Left-Wing trade unions, minorities and factory committees and workshop delegates. It is advisable that the all-embracing Left-Wing trade union conference should be preceded by conference locally and industrially.

## **For the Complete Independence of India:**

### **Resolution of the International Secretariat of the LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM:**

The International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism has, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the General Council and all affiliated organisations of the League Against Imperialism, addressed an Open Letter to the 44th Session of the Indian National Congress, which is meeting in Lahore, to all delegates to the Congress and to the revolutionary working and peasant masses of India. The letter states:

The Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress takes place at a momentous period in the rapidly developing struggle of the vast majority of the Indian People against ruthless British Imperialism. A gigantic mass movement headed by the Indian proletariat and poor peasantry is already in action against imperialism.

The brutal actions of the British Labour Government, their vicious prosecution of the courageous prisoners at Meerut, their imprisonment of hundreds of revolutionary fighters all over India, their daily prosecutions of newspapers for sedition in order to suppress the real facts, their shooting down of striking Bombay workers, their murder of the hunger strikers, can only be interpreted as bloody and futile attempts to stop the tremendous anti-imperialist wave which is so rapidly surging up in India.

The British imperialists, anxious to rivet still more firmly the chains upon the Indian people, find allies in the Indian bourgeoisie, the landlords and employers of labour who openly support the British domination. The British imperialists also find allies in those elements who to-day dominate the Indian National Congress itself,

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and make of it a bulwark against the demand of the Indian masses for action to end British misrule in India.

We call upon all genuine anti-imperialist delegates to the Congress to fight for the complete exposure and elimination from the Indian National Congress of those elements who endeavour consistently to impede the action of the Indian masses by compromises with British Imperialism, i.e. Dominion Status, Round Table Conference, etc. All honest fighters against imperialism must come out openly and resolutely for the demand for complete national independence, for the withdrawal of the British mercenary army, for the freedom of action of all economic, political and labour organisations, for genuine support of ever mass action against the exploiting class, white or native, for a propaganda and organisational drive for mass revolutionary action against imperialism.

The Indian people must be prepared to wage an implacable war against this Labour Government, they must be prepared to drive out of their ranks all those who support this Imperialist Government indirectly or directly.

As the agents of British Imperialism still dominate the Congress, and as the economic and political interests of the broad masses of workers and peasants, who constitute the heart of the anti-imperialist movement, are not reflected in the Congress Programme, it is clear that the Congress cannot be regarded as an instrument for prosecuting an uncompromising struggle against imperialism.

It is necessary for all the sincere anti-imperialist elements and organisations in the country—especially all those organisations that have already joined the League—to unite and coordinate their efforts by forming an All-India Anti Imperialist League or Federation with the minimum object laid down in the Statutes of the International League Against Imperialism, namely, the organising and carrying on of a determined mass struggle for the full independence of the country.

## Three Parties Letter to the Indian Communists

### An Open Letter Written by the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany

Dear Comrades,

The revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses for their national and social liberation has reached a turning point. The national bourgeoisie which has betrayed the revolutionary people are trying their best to preserve their influence over the toiling masses, in order to ward off the approaching Indian revolution.

From the efforts, the energetic and self-sacrificing struggle and the correct policy of the Indian Communists it depends to a great extent whether the treacherous bourgeoisie will maintain its influence for a long time and will successfully carry out its counter-revolutionary job, or whether the working-class, headed by the Communist Party of India, having isolated the national reformists, will lead the toiling masses of town and village to a victorious struggle for independence, and the workers' and peasants' power.

The objective conditions and the growth of the class consciousness of the Indian proletariat testifies to the fact that the latter course has every chance of fulfilment provided the Indian Communists overcome their lagging behind in the formation of a mass All-India Communist Party; provided they, on the basis of the platform of action published by them and the experience of the past years will energetically and jointly undertake the formation of the Communist Party and organise, not in words but in deeds, the struggle of workers and peasants.

This 'open letter' from the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany to the Indian Communists in May 1932 was published in the COMINTERN JOURNAL in May 1932. They appealed to the Indian Communists to 'undertake the formation of the Communist Party' in India. The Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of India was formed in 1933. INPRECOR, Vol. 12, No. 22 dated 19.5.1932, pages 436-442.

### 1. The Correlation of Class Forces

The Indian bourgeoisie which is trying to preserve its influence over the masses and which with the end of the Second Round Table Conference did not break off its negotiations with British imperialism—is continuing its policy of counter-revolutionary compromise with British imperialism and betrayal of the revolutionary people. British imperialism, making use of counter-revolutionary national reformism, widely developed the policy of repression and provocation, the organising of the reactionary elements of the country, trying to drown in blood the rising masses of workers and peasants and simultaneously continuing to carry on negotiations with the Indian bourgeoisie. Full agreement between the Indian bourgeoisie and the British imperialists is being hindered at the present time by the rapidly developing revolutionary movement under the conditions of the deepening economic crisis.

Because of the sharpening of the economic crisis, the insignificant and temporary reduction of taxes in a few provinces has not in the last helped the position of the peasants. The burden of ruin, oppression and poverty which is preconditioned by the whole system of imperialist feudal-money-lending exploitation and is aggravated by the present decline of agricultural prices together with the actual increase in taxation and reaction is reaching an unprecedented height. In spite of the fact that the process of drawing the peasant masses into the struggle is proceeding *unevenly*, it has already assumed such a powerful character (guerrilla warfare in Burma and Kashmir, struggles in U.P. etc.), that on the one hand it has compelled the National Congress (which was negotiating an agreement with the imperialists) to continue playing longer than it wished its sham opposition towards imperialism, in order to deceive the masses and disorganise the peasant struggle. And on the other hand it has forced the British imperialists to hasten in the use of barbarous forms of mass terror in order to break-up the people's movement.

On January 7th, 1932, the *Bombay Chronicle* was compelled to admit that:

“a noteworthy feature of the peasant movement in the United Provinces is the fact that the peasants are becoming their own

leaders. . . . that the peasant movement to an ever increasing extent takes place at the initiative of the peasants themselves, and that they have identified themselves with the Congress because they could not get assistance from other organisations."

The leaders of the National Congress, Gandhi, Nehru, and Co., are compelled to admit in a number of speeches the fact that the anti-imperialist movement and the agrarian struggle are beginning more and more to come together. The terrified bourgeoisie are now trying to disorganise the peasants struggle and to hold back the peasant movement, so that it should be limited to a peaceful, submissive economic campaign for small reduction of taxes, postponement to pay the debts, etc. However, in spite of the efforts of the National Congress, the peasant movement is beginning to go beyond the limits marked out by the Congress and dissatisfaction of the peasantry with the policy of the Congress is beginning to spread more and more.

Dissatisfaction with the policy of the National Congress is likewise increasing among the petty-bourgeoisie in the towns (the increase of the wave of terrorist actions, increased interest of various elements in the terrorist movement towards working-class movement and Marxism, speeches at student meetings in Calcutta, etc.) and is expressed to a still greater extent among the working masses.

The working-class by its activities beginning from 1928 has roused the town petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry to the struggle against British imperialists and thus had a tremendous influence on the development of the people's movement in 1930-31.

The events of the last few months (the Bombay demonstration against Gandhi, the Sholapur strike, etc.) show that the process of drawing the Indian proletariat into the economic and political struggle, accompanied by its (proletariat) liberation from the influence of the National Congress, is growing, and in spite of the yet existing uneven character, is beginning more and more to assume an *All-Indian character*. All the facts show that in most cases, the workers themselves begin the strikes and that among the workers, not only in Bombay but also in other places, there is

growing a stratum of active workers, who are capable not only of becoming the cement and the leaders of a mass revolutionary trade union movement, but with energetic work carried on by the Communists, can become the mass basis of a strong, working-class, illegal Indian Communist Party.

Some comrades are inclined to think that the working-class movement entered a period of decline and depression as the result of the defeat of the Bombay strike in 1929. Such a point of view is entirely wrong. It is true that the defeat of the strike (which took place as the result of the absence of a Communist Party and neglect of the task of spreading the strike to Ahmedabad and Sholapur), the growth of unemployment in the first half of 1930, the terror of the employers and the police and particularly the insufficient work of the revolutionary wing of the trade union movement had undoubtedly a bad effect on the position of the G.K.U. But this does not at all justify the theory of decline, because it was exactly in the very years of 1930-31 that (1) there was a final split of the Communist groups from "Left" national reformism and for the first time there really commenced the formation of an illegal Communist Party; (2) the working masses took a most active part in all political activities, to the point of open fights against the police and the troops (Sholapur, etc.); (3) the backward sections of the proletariat of the country, Bangalore, Cawnpore, Baroda etc., who had been lagging behind, began to be drawn in the struggle; (4) there took place a number of independent political activities of the working masses and the working-class by its methods of struggle put a specific imprint on the whole mass movement. The advanced sections of the proletariat commenced an open struggle against the National Congress. The historical demonstration of Bombay workers on the day of Gandhi's departure to London and the Sholapur demonstration of textile strikers are very remarkable instances of such a struggle against the influence of the National Congress.

The development of a spontaneous working-class movement, the growth of the class-consciousness of the proletariat most definitely refutes the theory of reaction among the working masses, of a decline of their fighting spirit, of the low level of



class-consciousness of the Indian proletariat outside Bombay. Such theories merely show that some comrades have not got over their feelings of disbelief in the power of the working-class, are not in contact with the workers outside Bombay, and confuse the question of the literacy of the workers with the level of their class-consciousness. These comrades have brought with them into the workers' movement the anti-proletarian bureaucratic organisational principles of the National Congress, division into leaders and masses, practical disbelief in the strength of the revolutionary rank and file, and therefore they cannot even explain the outbreak of spontaneous economic strikes and the tremendous participation of the working masses in the anti-imperialist movement. This shows that many Communists have not yet thought over the experience of the end of 1927 and 1928, when the Bombay textile workers very quickly kicked out the reformist group of Joshi, to the astonishment of the revolutionary leaders, and solidly came over to the platform of the "Red Flag",

It may be stated accurately that in India "The strength of the present movement lies in the awakening of the masses (chiefly the industrial proletariat), and its weakness lies in the insufficient consciousness and initiative of the revolutionary leaders". (Lenin).

The general picture of the Communist movement is not satisfactory. On the one hand, there is a tremendous development of the working-class movement which is unprecedented in the past. On the other hand, the Communist Party as yet consists of a small number (though the number is increasing) of weak groups, often isolated from the masses, disconnected with each other, *politically* not united and in some places not clearly differentiated from national reformism, adopting a conciliatory policy towards it. Instead of a struggle for a united All-India Communist Party, we find localism, provincialism, self-isolation from the masses, etc., which, though it could be understood to some extent in 1930, now represents the *main* danger to the revolutionary, proletarian movement.

The lagging behind of the Communist vanguard must be rapidly and most decisively overcome. This is the first and *the*

*most important* task for all those honest Communist revolutionaries who stand by the platform of action of the CPI, and are faithful to the cause of the Indian and world proletariat.

## 2. Communists and the Struggle for Independence

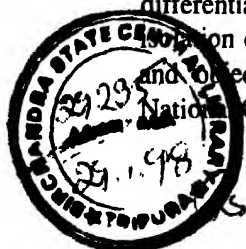
The biggest mistake made by Indian Communists consists of the fact that in reality they stood aside from the mass movement of the people against British Imperialism. In spite of the fact that the documents of the Communist movement have spoken about this mistaken policy, no change has yet taken place and self-isolation from the struggle for independence still exists.

In June 1930 in one of the documents of the Bombay organisation it said:

"We came in Bombay to a position when we actually withdrew from the struggle and left its field entirely to the National Congress. We limited our role to a role of a small group who set aside and issue once in a while leaflets. The result was one which could have been expected, that in the minds of the workers there grew an opinion that we are doing nothing and that the Congress is the only organisation which is carrying on the fight against imperialism and therefore, workers began to follow the lead of the Congress....."

"The result of the policy of actual withdrawal from the political struggle, lack of attempts to lead the masses, to organise them, to isolate the reformist elements proved to be harmful in regard to the growth of the Communist Party itself."

The self-isolation of Communists from the anti-imperialist mass struggle as a movement alleged to be purely a Congress movement, has created confusion in the Communist movement. It helped to increase among Communist-intellectuals the disbelief in the strength of the proletariat and the growth of its class-consciousness. It has hindered the development of the process of differentiation in the revolutionary movement, has hindered the isolation of "Left" national-reformists from the working masses and collectively strengthened the positions of the bourgeois National Congress.



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However, the whole history of the Indian working-class movement proves that this is a most dangerous error. At the dawn of the Indian working-class movement, Lenin, estimating the participation of the Bombay workers in the protest demonstration against the arrest of Tilak in 1908 wrote:

"In India also the proletariat has already reached the point of a conscious political struggle, and as this is the case, the days of the Anglo-Czarist order in India are numbered."

The movement of 1921-22 developing under the influence of the October Revolution showed a further maturing of the proletariat. Even the enemies of the revolutionary proletariat such as Gandhi were compelled to admit (see "Young India") that the workers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and other towns came forward during this period as a most active force, thereby terribly frightened the bourgeois National Congress. But the present period which is developing under the influence of the Chinese revolution and the successful construction of socialism in the USSR (the Bombay strikes, the boycott of the Simon and Whitley Commissions, the Meerut Trial, the movement of 1930-31, the formation of the Communist Party etc.), shows the gigantic extent of the working-class movement, its further progress and its particular activity in the struggle for independence. The whole of the history of the working-class movement decisively refutes those who do not believe in the strength of the proletariat and its ability to fight for the leadership of the people's movement.

The bourgeois *National Congress*, deeply hostile to the proletariat, distracting the workers and peasants from the struggle against the capitalists and landlords, has succeeded so far in maintaining influence over considerable broad masses of the workers. This can be explained mainly by the fact that bourgeois national reformism has cleverly made use of the hate of the working masses towards British imperialism, and using this has been forcing on them a policy of internal class peace covered by "radical" phrases on the "joint national struggle".

Thus the liberation of the proletariat from the influence of the treacherous bourgeoisie and conversion of the proletariat from an active political force into the *leading* force with the hegemony of

the people's movement can be brought about at the present time by the exposure of the bourgeois National Congress and its "Left" wing, Bose, Kandalkar, Roy etc., as the betrayers of the struggle for independence and can be realised only if the Communist Party takes a most energetic part in the struggle for independence on the basis of an irreconcilable struggle against the national reformists.

This participation in the anti-imperialist movement is *closely* connected and interwoven with the energetic participation of Communists in the everyday struggle for the economic interests of the working masses, with the most energetic support, organisation and development of the peasant struggle, the agrarian revolution and the attraction to its own side of all revolutionary-democratic elements who are prepared to struggle against British imperialism.

The pre-requisite for a correct policy for Communists in the anti-imperialist movement is a definite sharp, clear and *uncompromising* struggle and exposure of the National Congress and especially the "Left" national-reformists, first of all its special variety—the group of Roy-Kandalkar.

However, while struggling against "Left" national-reformism, it is incorrect to separate ourselves from the mass movement of the people who appear to be under the leadership of the National Congress. A distinction must be made between the bourgeois Congress leadership and those sections of the workers, peasants and revolutionary elements of the town petty-bourgeoisie who not understanding the treacherous character of the National Congress followed it, correctly seeing in the domination of British imperialism the *basis* of their slavery.

The National Congress was able to preserve its leadership over the masses of town poor, workers, student youth, artisans, etc. (who on their own initiative participated in a number of armed struggles with the police force of British imperialism), not by its positive political programme which under vague "radical" promises conceals its bourgeois-feudal contents, but only on the basis of assurances of its loyalty to the independence movement, utilising the hatred of the people toward bloodthirsty robber imperialism and the still existing illusions of a "united national front".

In order to isolate the National Congress and all the "Left" national-reformists from the toiling masses, in order to help the separation of the forces of revolution and counter-revolution and to establish the hegemony of the proletariat in the struggle of the people, the Indian Communists must take the most energetic part in the anti-imperialist movement and must be in the forefront in *all* activities, demonstrations and clashes of the toiling masses with the imperialists, coming forward as the organisers of the mass-struggle, everywhere and at all times, exposing openly and by concrete examples the treachery of the bourgeois National Congress and its "Left" wing. It is necessary to participate in all mass demonstrations, organised by the Congress, coming forward with our own *Communist* slogans and agitation; support all the revolutionary student demonstrations, be at the forefront in the clashes with the police, protesting against all political arrests, etc., constantly criticising the Congress leaders, especially "Left" and calling on the masses for higher forms of struggle, setting before the toiling masses ever more concrete and ever more revolutionary tasks.

The experience of the Girni Kamgar Union confirms the correctness of this analysis. The Kandalkar-Roy group was able to split the G.K.U., because paying lip service of their loyalty to the revolutionary struggle for independence they appealed to the workers to support the united national front and urged the workers to join the bourgeois National Congress, describing it as a people's organisation, helping it thus to disorganise the revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses. It was only by use of "anti-imperialist" phraseologies, utilising the hatred of the working masses towards the imperialists, that the national-reformists were able to attract considerable sections of the workers to their side.

But if the existence of "united national front" illusions played its part in maintaining the influence of the National Congress the self-isolation of the Communists objectively assisted the reformists and retarded the process of the breaking away of the workers from the bourgeois National Congress. The treacherous Roy-V.N. Joshi-Kandalkar group tries to hide its counter-revolutionary essence and its affiliation to the national-reformist

camp by the old and well-known bourgeois method, charging the Communists with ultra-radicalism and sectarianism.

This charge of sectarianism is nothing else but accusation of the Communists for their Bolshevik irreconcilability to national-reformism, for their revolutionary hatred of the imperialist and feudal system of exploitation, for their persistent and continuous preparation and mobilisation of the toiling masses for the revolutionary overthrow of imperialist rule.

The treacherous Roy-Kandalkar group in their appeal to the Trade Union Congress in Calcutta, in the leaflet issued in Bombay against Bradley and the Meerut prisoners, by the condemnation of the position of the revolutionary wing at the Nagpur Congress of trade unions, by the organisation of a revolutionary bloc with the Joshi-Giri-Bokhale group, by their disruptive work on the railroads, by their struggle against the general strike, the platform of action of the Communist Party of India, etc., only proved once more that they are agents of the bourgeoisie in the labour movement, that they are carrying on a policy of subordination of the working-class to the bourgeoisie, that they are hindering the differentiation and break of the toiling masses with national reformism and are disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants for independence, land and bread.

In phrases pledging their support to the Comintern, the Roy-Kandalkar-Joshi group in deeds are the worst enemies of the international revolutionary proletariat and the Indian anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is: the formation of an All-Indian Communist Party, the isolation of the national-reformists and the development of the people's revolution under the leadership of the proletariat can only be achieved when the Communists determinedly liquidate their self-isolation from the anti-imperialist struggle of the masses. When as the vanguard of the masses, showing the way of revolutionary struggle sharply and mercilessly exposing and struggling against the National Congress and its "Left" wing—the Communists will show *in practice* by their Communist activity that the Communist Party is the leader of the toiling masses and is the only leader of the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution.

From this point of view, the Communists must also sharply combat all ideas of those comrades who unconsciously come to self-isolation from the mass anti-imperialist struggle through their desire to preserve the cadres in order to gain the time for building the Party.

Such a line is harmful and shortsighted. The preservation of cadres, the guarantee of continuity and the formation of an illegal Party is an *extremely necessary task*. However, the fulfilment of it must be achieved not through self-isolation from the anti-imperialist struggle but only by the correct combination of illegal and legal methods of work and organisation and the most energetic drawing into our ranks and developing of new cadres from workers and trustworthy revolutionary youth.

### **3. The Struggle against the National Congress and the Petty-Bourgeoisie**

The increase of the dissatisfaction of the broad masses with the policy of the National Congress (negotiations in London, etc.), directly connected with the deepening of the crisis, the offensive of imperialism and the further revolutionising of the toiling masses has compelled the leaders of the National Congress to follow the path of new "Left" manoeuvres in order to strengthen their influence. Very characteristic in this connection is the fact that the "Left" national-reformists Bose, etc. have again raised the question of their readiness to create a separate organisation of "Lefts" and have begun to "criticise" the participation of the National Congress in the Round Table Conference, etc. (see his speech at the Conference of the Youth in Maharashtra). All this is done in order to fool the masses once more and organise if necessary a "safety valve" like the former League of Independence to give the outlet for the dissatisfaction of the masses. These manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie show the process of ferment and disappointment which is spreading among the toiling masses and confirms the *correctness* of the platform of action of the CPI where it speaks of the necessity of the sharpest differentiation, criticism and exposure of "Left" national-reformism, including its foremost detachment, the group of Roy,

as the necessary pre-requisite for the mobilisation of the toiling masses for a revolutionary struggle and the creation of a mass Communist Party.

Struggling against the bourgeois National Congress, some comrades mistakenly identify the bourgeoisie with the petty-bourgeoisie, mechanically contrasting the "class" interests of the proletariat with the independence movement as a whole, while other Communists, fighting against this mistaken conception, *forget* about the bourgeoisie, forget about the instability, the waverings and hesitations of the petty-bourgeoisie, sometimes in practice join with or follow the latter, thus objectively subordinating the proletariat to the leadership of the national bourgeoisie.

For example, it was a mistake when the leaders of the trade union movement stated (see *Bombay Chronicle*) that the split in Calcutta is a matter for the workers, affects only the trade union movement, is connected only with the economic struggle and has no connection whatsoever with the "patriotic" feelings of the nationalists. The struggle inside the working-class against the bourgeoisie for the majority of the working-class is of decisive importance for the whole of the anti-imperialist movement. The split and issues raised in Calcutta are also an important stage in the anti-imperialist struggle and the differentiation of the forces of revolution and counter-revolution. The organisation of an All-India Centre of the trade union movement, based on the principles of the class-struggle must serve, in spite of the mistakes made, not only for the class consolidation of the proletariat, but must also help in the mobilisation of the peasantry and the revolutionary strata of the petty-bourgeoisie around the proletariat and its Communist vanguard. To do this it is also necessary to distinguish between the revolutionary patriotism of the toiling masses suffering from national oppression and the treacherous counter-revolutionary pseudo "patriotism" of the bourgeoisie. We must learn to prove that, that portion of the trade union Congress which followed Bose, Kandalkar, Roy and Co. had carried on and is carrying on a struggle against the "patriotism", against the anti-imperialist fight of the revolutionary people. Those who separate



the class interests of the proletariat from the struggle for independence *in practice* drive the toiling masses and the revolutionary sections of the petty-bourgeoisie into the arms of the National Congress and the "Left" wing, strengthen the position of the bourgeoisie, instead of rallying the toiling masses around the Communist Party and fighting for the hegemony of the proletariat.

A mistake of an opposite character is the statement of some comrades that the anti-imperialist movement of 1930-31 can be described as a movement of the town petty-bourgeoisie. From the view point of these comrades, the proletariat and peasantry as the basic forces of the Indian revolution disappear, and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, with its still great influence over the masses is forgotten. The tactics of the Communists as a result are adapted to the town petty-bourgeoisie and hence criticism of the National Congress and the "Left" national-reformists is toned down. Among the supporters of this view there arose at the end of 1930, under the influence of the waverings of the town petty-bourgeoisie, a theory of "reaction" in the working-class movement (see "Railwayman", November 1930). This theory incorrectly explained the situation of 1930 and would be wrong for the present period. Is it correct as "Railwayman" states that the working-class in 1930 came into motion under the influence of the dissatisfied petty-bourgeoisie and fell under its leadership?

It is not correct. In 1928-29 the proletariat by its strikes, by its struggle against the Simon and Whitley Commissions, by its revolutionary position at the Nagpur T.U. Congress, etc. aroused the petty-bourgeoisie to the anti-imperialist struggle. In 1930 the most active element in all mass actions in the towns (Bombay, Sholapur, Calcutta, Madras, etc.) was the working-class. In many cases the advanced sections of the workers spontaneously took the initiative into their hands, drawing over the students and the city poor to their side (Calcutta, etc.). Therefore, to underestimate the growth of the revolutionary consciousness and activity of the working-class, to claim that it was an appendage to the petty-bourgeoisie means in reality to fail to see the process of development of the proletariat, to lag at the tail end of the events,

give up the idea of forming a mass Communist Party and blame the workers for their (some of the revolutionary leaders) own pessimism, shortsightedness and inability to organise the struggle of the working-class. Depicting the petty-bourgeoisie as the leading force in 1930 and constructing a theory of "reaction", the authors of the article made a mistake in the sense that they gloss over the question of the treachery of the national bourgeoisie which succeeded in 1930 in leading the petty-bourgeoisie and a considerable portion of those sections of workers and peasants who for the first time were drawing into the independence movement. By stating that the working-class was following the petty-bourgeoisie, the authors of the article unconsciously help to conceal the bourgeois character of the National Congress, identify the petty-bourgeoisie with the bourgeoisie and in reality hinder the exposure of the national reformists—objectively helping to spread the harmful theory of the necessity of toning down criticism of the National Congress so as not to frighten the masses who follow it.

That which the author of the article called "reaction" in reality meant that among the workers there was a growing discontent with the treacherous policy of the National Congress, that the illusions of the "united national front" had begun to disappear and a drift of the masses away from the National Congress had commenced. The absence of the Communist Party hinders this process and makes it possible for the enemies of the working-class to bring demoralisation into the ranks of the proletariat. It is from this point of view, without throwing the mistakes of the revolutionary leaders on to the workers, that we should attentively consider the counter-revolutionary speech of Ruikar and the resolution adopted by the Nagpur textile trade union in January 1932. Speaking of the growing disbelief of the workers in the leaders of the National Congress, Ruikar called on the workers not to support any political party whatever but to carry on *only* an economic struggle, and persuaded the Nagpur textile union to pass a resolution not to take any further part in the national movement and to restrict themselves merely to the trade union struggle. ("B.C." Jan. 14).

These facts testify to the drifting away of the masses from the National Congress and of the treacherous work of the national-reformists Kandalkar-Ruikar-Roy, once more confirm the harmfulness and the danger of the theory of "reaction" which is linked up with self-isolation from the anti-imperialist struggle and lack of faith in the working-class. Self-isolation from the anti-imperialist struggle aids the work of all the agents of imperialism who are trying to take the workers away from the political struggle, to disorganise their ranks especially at this moment when millions of peasants are being drawn in, when dissatisfaction and disappointment with the National Congress is growing, when the class character and treachery of the National Congress in the struggle for independence and the interests of the peasantry becomes clearer.

In close connection with the mistakes exposed above we find the question of underestimating the danger of "Left" national-reformism and an insufficient struggle against it. In all the statements of the Communists (leaflet for the Karachi National Congress, etc.), the question of the "Lefts" and their special function and role *was not raised*. A struggle is carried on against persons but the "Programme", manoeuvres and nature of "Left" national-reformism is not exposed. Such a mistake was made also at the Trade Union Congress in Calcutta. But it is not accidental that the "Left" national-reformists are hastening to put on the "socialist" armour and the renegade Roy swears devotion to the Comintern. The "Lefts" will come more and more to the forefront, especially the Roy group, whose particular task is to carry on disintegrating work among the proletarian *vanguard*. The position of the comrades who tried to secure unity with Kandalkar was entirely wrong because instead of raising questions of principle, the struggle against national-reformism, they raised the question of persons, forgetting that the positions of groups and persons always reflect the interests of definite classes, and thus these comrades objectively have been helping the National Congress. The point of view of those comrades who think that criticism of the "Left" national-reformists in the trade unions will lead to the isolation of the Communist Party is wrong. On the contrary, if

criticism is taken to the *masses*, the Communists will only strengthen their influence and win over the masses to their programme. We must catch the "Left" national-reformists at their words we must expose before the masses their phrases appealing to the people *comparing them with their deeds*, showing that the first and smallest test was the fact that instead of fighting against the imperialists they went to the Round Table Conference, instead of helping the peasants they helped the imperialists to collect taxes and now they are disorganising the no rent movement, instead of supporting the workers they sabotage the general strike, instead of a revolutionary struggle they preach counter-revolutionary non-violence and submission, instead of supporting the revolutionary workers they split the Trade Union Congress in Calcutta and made an agreement with the Joshi and Giri group, the open agents of the imperialists, etc. Therefore, we must consider as incorrect the fact that the proletarian revolutionaries, while struggling against the national-reformists at the Calcutta T.U. Congress, did not come out simultaneously with a special declaration against the Sengupta group, thereby hindering the differentiation and the struggle against national-reformism. The struggle against national-reformism and still more against its dangerous variety the Roy-Kandalkar-V. N. Joshi group serves as a base and is connected with the overcoming of two incorrect points of view which have appeared in the process of the formation of the Communist movement. One of these consists of passive resistance to the extensive recruiting of revolutionary workers into the ranks of the Party. And the other consists of glossing over the *class character of the Communist Party*. It is wrong to propose to the revolutionary petty-bourgeois organisations to fuse with the Communist Party. An alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry is the *basis* of the strategy of the Indian Communist Party, but while fighting for the leadership of the anti-imperialist and the general peasant struggle, we must not forget for a minute about the separate organisation of the town and village proletariat and the formation of a complete *independent* class party—the Communist Party. While fighting in alliance with the peasantry, the Indian proletariat must preserve its class

independence; and this is the only guarantee not only that it will be able to ensure its hegemony (if a Communist Party exists) in the general national movement, but that after the overthrow of the power of the imperialists it will be able to *draw with it* the majority of the oppressed peasantry in the struggle for socialism.

#### **4. The peasants and the movement for non-payment of taxes**

The tremendous growth of the peasant movement, taking on in some districts the character of guerrilla warfare, the struggle in the United Provinces, etc. was the main cause which compelled the National Congress, concealing its actions by "Left" manoeuvres, to move more and more to the right, against the revolutionary people. The National Congress has in every way retarded the "no rent and no taxes" movement for one and a half years, helped the British Imperialists to collect taxes and debts from the peasants. And now, stating in words that it sympathises with the non-payment movement, continues in reality to carry on disorganisational counter-revolutionary work against it.

The present "no rent and no tax" movement has a spontaneous character. The task of the Communists at the present time is: following the policy as outlined in the platform of action of the Communist Party of India to start actually the organisation of a mass movement for the non-payment of taxes, rent and debts, drawing into this campaign all revolutionary democratic elements and giving it the anti-imperialist character of the struggle for independence. Only in this way, proving by concrete examples how the "radical" words of the National Congress differ from their disorganising actions, will it be possible to *isolate* the national-reformists and develop a powerful peasant movement. Besides direct agitational and organisational work by the Party and the utilisation of the industrial workers connected with the villages, it is necessary to call on the revolutionary elements of the *rank and file* followers of the National Congress, the youth leagues, the peasant organisation, etc. to undertake the organisation of a country-wide movement for the non-payment of taxes and rent, in spite of the National Congress and over its head, organising *peasants committees*, self-defence groups and establishing contacts with the town workers.

It is not correct to counterpose the slogan of the general strike to the mass movement for non-payment of taxes and debts, civil disobedience and the boycott. While supporting this mass movement, the Communists must win the leadership of it, and exposing the treachery of the National Congress by concrete examples develop and guide it into genuinely revolutionary channels.

### **5. The slogan of the general strike and the struggle for the majority of the proletariat**

At the end of 1930 some revolutionists (see article of "Railwayman") took a negative attitude to the slogan of the general strike. These comrades explained their negative attitude claiming that the workers were not yet sufficiently class-conscious and that most of the trade unions opposed this slogan.

The basis for this position was an incorrect estimation of the general situation, lack of faith in the strength of the working-class and confusion on the question of the tactical tasks of Communists.

The objective situation of 1930 and at the present time shows that the slogan of a general strike was and is timely, corresponds to the relationship of class forces and is one of the basic uniting slogans for the next stage of the struggle of the working-class for hegemony in the people's movement.

The author of the article confused the question of the slogan of the general strike as a tactical line for Communists with the question of the *date* for calling the strike, which depends on a number of concrete factors. We must not, under the excuse of disagreement with the selection of a date for the strike, carry on a struggle against the tactical line of the revolutionary proletariat. "To consider the mood of the workers is important when to choose the moment of action but not for deciding the tactical line of action of the working-class" (Lenin).

It is also incorrect to consider the slogan of a general strike according to the attitude of the trade union leaders. The majority of the Indian trade unions are bureaucratic not mass organisations, acting against the interests of the working masses, *without contact with them*. At the present time the strength of these reformist trade

unions is the result of the weak activity of the proletarian revolutionaries, of disorganisation of the workers' rank and the fact that the national-reformists utilise the anti-imperialist sentiment of the working-class. It is useful to recollect the experience of Bombay in 1928 and the rapid breaking up of the textile "Union" of Joshi & Co.

When considering the slogan of the general strike we must not mistake the attitude of the reformist leaders for the real sentiments of the working-class. This is a gross mistake.

In order to break down the disorganising influence and work of the reformists, it was necessary not to withdraw the slogan of the general strike, but on the contrary transfer the struggle for it to the *rank and file*, to the masses, exposing the reformists and *organising* the workers.

The events of the last few months (the increase of strikes, the growing demand of the railwaymen to call a railway strike, the growth of unemployment and poverty, resistance to the terror of the imperialists, etc.) show that support for the slogan of the general strike is *increasing*. The task of Communists is to come forward not in words but in deeds as *initiators* of the struggle of the workers. To start to organise strike committees composed of rank and file workers and using the assistance of *all* revolutionary democratic organisations, youth leagues, rank and file revolutionaries at present deceived by the National Congress and thus mobilising all forces over the head of the reformist trade union leaders, develop the strike movement, especially on the railways, and by means of them, linking political strike. We greet with joy the fact that Indian workers, as it is stated in the "Railway Mazdoor" are beginning to carry out this task. The general strike is of historic importance for the development of the revolutionary movement and the conversion of the proletariat into the leading force, mobilising the peasants and the city poor around it. It will deliver the first powerful blow at the power of the imperialists—bringing the revolutionary people right up to the highest form of struggle, the revolutionary uprising.

The development of the strike movement places before the Communists the task of forming mass trade unions, factory

committees, and the necessity to combine the battles for the everyday interests with the political struggle. The revolutionary T.U. movement has had a number of individual successes, the strike at Sholapur and Bombay, the calling of a conference of textile workers with the participation of 400 delegates from 20 factories, the strengthening of its position among the railway-men, the growth of the workers' press etc.

However, the weakness of the G.K.U. the loss of the leadership of the strike at the "Madhowji Dharamsi" factory, the loss of the leadership in the tramway union etc. also show that the Communists disdain the everyday work in the factories and trade unions, do not build up groups of active workers, do not form Communist fractions, do not carry on sufficient everyday organisational and agitational work. It is only by leading and defending the interests of the workers in large and small struggles *constantly and every day*, in attack and defence, that the Communist Party can win the unbreakable confidence of the working-class and lead it to the decisive battle against the exploiting classes.

It is time to get rid of the traditions of the past in the trade unions, the traditions of bureaucratic methods of work from above, the division into leaders and rank and file, and to start to form mass trade unions with *elected* management committees, consisting of workers from the bench, regularly functioning and *in contact* with the working masses, boldly promoting workers, supporting them and in every way developing their initiative and self-reliance.

We must carry on energetic work among the workers who are following the reformist trade unions. It is a great mistake to continue the practice of self-isolation from workers' meetings and the mass trade unions which are under the influence of the reformists. Communists must *always* take part in them and carry on work among the workers, urging them to join the united fighting front of the proletariat.

During strikes and other economic and political actions of the workers, it is necessary to propose to the workers who follow the reformists to help the general struggle, take part in the rank and file unity committees, defend the workers' demands etc. and thus



not in words *but in deeds* fight for the unity of the workers, exposing at the same time the reformists.

At the same time it is necessary to change the passive attitude of Communists to the question of the *All-Indian* trade union movement and repudiate the special theory that "the trade union Congress is not something living and concrete for the workers". In this, as in the other questions, there is shown lack of faith in the working-class and local tasks are counterposed to All-Indian tasks, the G.K.U. is *counterposed* to the trade union Congress.

Such counterposing is very harmful. While developing a hundred times more our activity for strengthening the G.K.U. and converting it into an All-Indian textile union (including Sholapur, Ahmedabad, Nagpur etc.). it is necessary completely to do away with a negative attitude towards the All-Indian trade union movement and begin to form mass trade unions all over the country in the coal, steel and jute industry, the plantations and the railroads, *attracting* to our side the workers of the reformist trade unions.

After the split of the Calcutta Trade Union Congress, the revolutionary wing did *nothing* to form a mass trade union movement while the national-reformists are carrying on a "unity" campaign (i.e. disorganisation of the revolutionary proletariat), organised a number of All-Indian campaigns ("Labour Day" etc.), formed a textile federation, seized the initiative on the railroads, formed provincial trade union councils, etc.

Even now the revolutionary trade union movement is in a position to send a number of groups of active workers to various centres in the country so as to start work among the rank and file workers. Only by boldly *promoting* workers and revolutionary tested Communist intellectuals into the leadership, starting real work and abandoning a number of mistakes explained above—only in this way the Communists will be able to start the organisation of the proletariat and develop the struggle for the hegemony of the working-class in the people's movement.

## **6. The struggle for an All-Indian Party**

The biggest gain of the proletarian movement, the greatest move forward is the fact that the advanced workers and revolu-

tionaries have entirely separated from the National Congress and commenced to form an illegal Communist Party. The idea of an illegal Communist Party has *already* been adopted and is beginning to be carried out.

However, the development of the Indian Communist movement is being blocked by the state of discord, separate existence of the Party groups and connected with it a number of mistakes enumerated above, without overcoming of which the movement cannot develop further normally.

If the period of isolated circles might have been considered to be inevitable in 1930 and at the beginning of 1931, at the present time such a position must be considered as *extremely* harmful and dangerous to the further development of the Communist movement.

The movement has now reached such a stage of development which it is *absolutely necessary* to raise resolutely and firmly the standard of struggle for an All-Indian Communist Party, for uniting and welding together all the Communist groups, for the organisation and ideological *unity* of the Communist ranks, utilising and developing at the same time the initiative from below to form and develop new local groups and organisations.

Hence it must be recognised that the Party organisation has not carried on a correct line, and instead of a struggle for the party it has in reality taken the line of provincialism. Instead of helping the local groups, it has taken up the position of self-limitation and reducing the whole Party to a local organisation not linked up with other local organisations. Instead of rousing and organising the *ideological* struggle for the Party, widely explaining and discussing all the questions of principle of the movement (for which purpose it is necessary in the *shortest possible time* to create an illegal printed organ of the Central Committee and legal newspapers), the Party organisation was not even able to continue the publication of the legal Marxist paper of an All-Indian importance. The absence of such illegal and legal papers (and its substitution by the trade union press does not save the position) not only drove all disagreements deep inside hindering the working out of a united Party line, but it played a tremendous

negative role in the formation of the Communist Party, strengthening of contacts between the various districts, development of the class-struggle against the imperialists and the bourgeoisie, and winning of the workers and the revolutionary youth to the side of the Communist Party. Revolutionary newspapers are appearing everywhere in the country (in Calcutta, Madras, Punjab etc.), trying to preach Marxism and defend the proletarian point of view. However, the absence of an illegal (and a legal) Party press makes it exceedingly *difficult* to influence them, to struggle against confusion, discord and gross mistakes, *hinders* the working out of a united Communist line and the establishment of unity of views and methods of struggle. It is necessary to understand firmly the teachings of Lenin on the role of a Central Party paper as an agitator and organiser of the masses and the Party. This is particularly important for the *present* period of the Indian Communist movement.

Among the circles developed a psychology of provincialism and refusal to struggle on an *All-Indian* scale. On all questions which were of All-Indian importance (the All-Indian Trade Union Movement, the general strike on the railroads, the peasant struggle, the movement for the non-payment of rent and taxes, the Round Table Conference, the jute strike etc.), the Communist groups proved unable to rise in their approach above the provincial horizon. They did not see the general tasks and the All-Indian scale of the struggle, which in its turn led them to narrow down their tasks on the spot in their provinces. In practice they completely cleared the All-Indian arena for the national-reformists, who took the initiative in the organisation (i.e., in reality disorganisation) of the railroad movement, the textile federation, the united front campaign, the work among the miners and metal workers of Jamshedpur, etc. Abandonment of the All-Indian arena, *self-isolation* for instance, inability of revolutionary leaders of the Bombay workers to give assistance to the jute strike in Calcutta, etc. in practice leads to the strengthening of the influence of the bourgeoisie, hinders the formulation of the Communist Party, prevents the winning by the working-class of the hegemony in the struggle of the people, leads to the *loss of*

*initiative* in all questions whatsoever in the struggle for the trade union Congress, preparations for the railway strike etc.

Provincialism and discord is also shown in the fact that the G.K.U. alone is made to take the place of the All-Indian trade union movement. In practice this leads to the fact that the Communist groups *voluntarily* leave the All-Indian arena and objectively play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists.

The existence of the Party as a number of isolated groups brings about complaints that there are no forces, no comrades available, that it is impossible to cope with the great tasks facing the revolutionary movement. Hence we often find passivity, despondency, mutual disputes, deviations of all kinds, sectarianism and an opportunist attitude to national reformism, on basis of which the possibility of splits not on a principled basis becomes very easy. However, this complaint about the absence of forces is contradicted by thousands of facts of everyday life which show that among the workers and the revolutionary youth there are thousands of active fighters sympathetic to the Communist Party.

It is necessary to come out decisively for an All-Indian Communist Party. While increasing in every way, hundreds of times, local work (especially in Calcutta, etc.) it is necessary at the same time somewhat to move the Centre of gravity of Party work to the All-Indian activity and begin to build the Party, carrying on the struggle for a common political line, creating a net of local Party organisations, developing the sense of responsibility, Party feeling and discipline, encouraging local initiative, and courageously drawing into our ranks workers and those revolutionary intellectuals who are true to the working-class cause. Such a change will not weaken but on the contrary will make stronger and more stable the local activity, contacts and agitation. It is necessary to build and extend Party organisations everywhere, encouraging local initiative. The strength of the Communist Party is determined by the degree of its contact with the broad masses, above all with the proletariat. The only correct form of organisation able to secure this contact and the fighting ability of the Party is the system of *factory nuclei*. Particularly in

India, under conditions of terror and comparatively high concentration of the proletariat, the formation of factory nuclei is an *absolutely* essential, obligatory and highly important task of the Party. It is necessary to get in touch with and draw in all active industrial workers, because that is the chief guarantee of successful building of an illegal Communist Party, able to withstand the terror and lead the struggle of the working-class. It is essential to arrange at the same time, propagandist circles, short courses, etc. in order to develop and teach the active workers the elemental essentials of Marxism, helping them in every way to be drawn into active Party work as organisers and leaders of working-class-struggles and Party organisations. The Communist groups were also unable to properly combine legal and illegal forms of work. In some districts, following the correct position of the platform of action of the Communist Party of India that under present conditions the Communist Party of India can exist *only* as an illegal Party, the Communists have not been able to ensure the formation and normal existence of illegal organisations and leading organs.

It must be thoroughly realised (and this will determine how seriously and consistently the Communists stand by the illegal Party and the revolutionary struggle) that the leading organs of the Party and the kernel of the Party organisations must be in an *illegal position* and that mixing the conspirative and open apparatus of the Party organisation is *fatal* for the Party and plays into the hands of the Government provocation. While developing the illegal organisation in every way, measures must be taken for preserving and strengthening the conspirative kernel of the Party organisation. For the purpose of all kinds of open activity (in the press, meetings, leagues, trade unions etc.), special groups and commissions, etc. should be formed which working under the leadership of Party committees, should under no circumstances injure the existence of illegal nuclei.

To sum up: the slogan of an All-Indian illegal, centralised Communist Party, ideologically and organisationally united, a true section of the Comintern, fighting for the platform of action of the Communist Party of India and the programme of the Communist

International must become the *central slogan* for gathering and forming the Party and for the struggle against waverings, against a tendency of keeping to isolated circles, against toning down the struggle against national-reformism and opportunist sectarianism, all of which hinder the victory of the working-class.

### Conclusion

The international situation is becoming more and more acute. Japanese imperialism is carrying on war in China and together with a number of imperialist states is preparing its division and complete subjugation. It meets the resistance of U.S.A., which is striving to strengthen and widen its imperialist position in China by way of reducing the share of the other imperialist robbers and increased exploitation of the Chinese masses. The military offensive, the war of the imperialist states against the U.S.S.R., the first working-class republic, which has the sympathy of the revolutionary proletariat and the oppressed colonial masses of the world—is *fast approaching*. British imperialism is once more trying to utilise India, as in world war, to supply reinforcements for its army, to use its raw materials and to make it into a strategic basis for the war against the U.S.S.R. and the revolutionary peoples of the East. The Indian bourgeoisie is *once more* betraying and selling the revolutionary people for a mass of pottage.

In the approaching deadly struggle between world imperialism and the proletarian state—the role of the Indian Communists is enormous. The Indian anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution can deliver a death blow at British imperialism and thus hasten the complete destruction of capitalism throughout the world and guarantee the victory of the world revolution. The Communist Party of India occupies a responsible sector of the world revolution. And for this struggle the Indian Communists must prepare in a truly Bolshevik manner.

At the present time, the tasks are exceptionally difficult. But for the Indian Communists there is no other revolutionary way to solve these tasks, except Bolshevik way and that is: with the maximum of energy, tenacity and consistency, following the

Marxian-Leninist theory and practice, to undertake inspite of any difficulties, individual failures and defeats, the fulfilment of these tasks and the most important of them—the creation of a true Communist Party.

There can be no greater crime than if the Indian Communists (having their platform of action of the Communist Party of India and if they agree with the present letter) *instead* of struggle for great historical aims of the Indian and world proletariat, will follow the path of unprincipled factional struggle, fractions and personal groupings. Unprincipled factional struggle will play *into the hands* of the British imperialists. True Communist groups must put the interests of the proletariat above everything else, direct all their efforts towards the rapid formation of the Communist Party, settling all disputed questions within the framework of the Communist International and if necessary with its assistance.

The Communists of the whole world do not doubt that, inspite of their present weakness, inexperience and certain isolation, the Indian Communists will show sufficient Bolshevik firmness, courage and decisiveness to come out on the broad All-Indian arena of struggle for the Party—the leader and organiser of the Indian revolution.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany.

## The Indian Bourgeoisie and the National Revolution

M. N. Roy

The speech of the British Viceroy in the Indian Legislative Assembly on January 28 indicated how imperialism plans to meet the situation in India. Evidently imperialism has not failed to notice the radicalisation of the Nationalist Movement, and to focus its attention on the force causing this radicalisation. Imperialism recognises its most dangerous and determined enemy in the working-class. Its tactics in the present situation, as hinted by the Viceroy, are to point out to the Nationalist bourgeoisie the dangerousness of the situation, and ask their co-operation in meeting the common danger. The Viceroy was encouraged to put forth this policy of counter-revolutionary united front by the attitude of the Nationalist bourgeoisie who are positively alarmed by the situation, and frankly express their disapproval of any revolutionary movement. The following quotations illustrate the situation.

Commenting upon the "critical situation in the country" as indicated by the events of the last twelve months, and by the Congress and Conferences during the closing week of the year, Bipin Chandra Pal writes:

It is no longer possible to describe the Congress as a demonstration of mere middle class discontent. . . . It can no longer be said that the educated classes in India have no backing in their political struggle from the masses of the people. . . . Indeed, *it is at least doubtful whether the lead comes at all from the educated leaders* or whether these leaders are not more or less helpless instruments in the hand of the awakened multitudes. Every one of the Congress leaders



feels that his position in the movement entirely depends upon the favour of the crowd. No leader to-day dares to follow the lead of his reason or conscience, not even the Mahatma (Gandhi). Yet in 1920 Gandhi's word was law to the multitudes. . . . The Leviathan has commenced to move. . . .

This was demonstrated by the invasion of the Congress by twenty thousand labourers. This was verification of the adage, "coming events cast their shadows before." . . . On one of the banners of this procession of working men was inscribed "Long Live Independent Socialist Republic of India." . . . The time cannot be very far when the working-classes, once aroused to the sense of their power to coerce the Government of the country, will refuse to be exploited by the middle-class politicians; "Red" leaders will rise from among them who will have no respect for any law or order either economic, political or moral.

Pal presents this remarkably true and well-drawn picture of the situation not as something to be welcomed. He draws it as a warning not only to the Nationalist bourgeoisie, but also to the petty bourgeois radicals who unconsciously are riding on the crest of the rising tide of revolution. An ex-Jacobin himself, Pal warns the Indian Jacobins not to play with fire. He reminds them what they are, and explains to them the dangerousness of the game they are playing. He writes:

Neither the Congress leaders nor the Moslem leaders in their Khilafat Conference or their League, much less the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha, will bring about a revolution. Some of them may talk of Civil-disobedience and non-payment of taxes; but none of them is made of the stuff that creates revolutions. . . . Yet all these people have been working for revolution, which, if and when it bursts, will make them its first victims. Once popular passion is roused by them for their purpose, neither God nor man will be able to keep the angry multitudes non-violent.

Having pointed out the dangerous potentiality of the situation Pal, who is the foremost ideologist of bourgeois Nationalism,

appeals for a counter-revolutionary united front of all who would save India from the horrors of class-struggle. He continues:—

And let the Government know that should there be a revolutionary outburst under present conditions, they will not find it possible to grapple with it as easily as they grappled with a peaceful upheaval ten years ago. It behoves, therefore, both Indian and imperial statesmanship to take counsel together without delay, and find a way out of the crisis . . . The proceedings of the Congress and other gatherings of the last Christmas week in Calcutta offer a serious warning to both Indian and British statesmanship to settle their conflicts before it is too late, and the future completely passes out of their hands.

This is not a solitary voice. Pal, a clever and courageous political thinker as he is, only expresses the sentiments of the entire class he represents, frankly and logically. The objective importance of these views as indicating the role of the bourgeoisie in the national revolution is fully appreciated when the history of the man expressing them is known. A quarter of a century ago Pal was the leader of the Radical Left Wing of the Nationalist Movement. At that time he occupied in the country a place analogous to that recently occupied by Gandhi. It was partially under his leadership that the National Congress, a quarter of a century ago, broke away from the monopoly of the Indian disciples of imperialist Liberalism. Pal can be called the father of Indian Jacobinism, though it is long since he has betrayed his child. Indeed, he was a revolutionary when the Indian Nationalist bourgeoisie was still a revolutionary class. In view of these facts, Pal's views are particularly indicative.

But Pal is not alone. Similar views are expressed by an ever-growing number of spokesmen of the Nationalist bourgeoisie. These views increase in volume and clearness in proportion as the revolutionary forces assert themselves on the situation—in proportion as the working-class appears on the political scene as an independent and dominant factor of the situation.

The Indian Liberal Federation represents that section of the Nationalist bourgeoisie which broke away from the Congress

when this, in 1920, adopted the tactics of non-co-operation with the British Government. It represents heavy industrial, trading and landowning interests. Last year, a considerable section of the Liberal Federation modified its attitude of co-operation with the Government, and joined the movement for boycotting the Simon Commission. In the Annual Conference of the Liberal Federation, which met at the same time as the National Congress, the President, Chimanlal Setalvad, devoted a large part of his speech to indicating the "right way to meet the impatient idealists and to prevent the spread of Communist and Socialist ideas in India." Among other things he said:—

We are now passing through very momentous and anxious times, and it must be remembered by *all those who are interested in the welfare of this country*—and I include in that description not only ourselves, but also the British Government who in the wisdom of Providence have been brought into partnership with us—that the time through which India is now passing is really very anxious. A mentality is growing which is absolutely impatient with the present state of things and which, if not guided in the proper channel, will swallow everything. The Communistic ideas and Socialism are the coming menace. If that mentality grows it will swallow Dominion Status, it will swallow independence, it will swallow the present structure of society . . . The only way of preventing the spread of Socialism and Communism is for the authorities (British) to take a bold step and to concede at once what we have been asking for, namely, Dominion Status.

We of the Liberal faith have served the country all these years, and value and cherish British connection, and have stood by the Government believing that British connection is good for both the countries. If our moderate counsels are not heeded, there are very troublesome times ahead with the growing discontent against the Government and the present order of society.

The implication of this speech cannot be missed. The Indian bourgeoisie offer imperialism their willing co-operation to combat the common enemy. The counter-revolutionary sentiment

of the Nationalist bourgeoisie is evident. Only they have no power to give practical expression to this sentiment. Therefore, they appeal to the imperialist overlords for some political power which they would wield for suppressing not only the working-class but also the national revolution. There is a favourable response to this appeal. While it is out of the question that full Dominion Status will be granted in the immediate future, it is practically certain that the native bourgeoisie will be given considerable power in the provincial Government. This will very likely include the administration of police by Indian Ministers. Even a large section of the British residents in India have recommended this measure. The object is to commandeer the services of the Nationalist bourgeoisie in the counter-revolutionary combat against the working-class and any other revolutionary movement.

The *Leader*, an organ of the Liberal Federation, commented on the speech quoted above as follows:—

Communism and other undesirable forms of extremism are the result of the policy of economic exploitation and racial domination. Steps should be taken to stop the exploitation and misleading of the masses for revolutionary purpose . . . The Liberals are opposed to revolutionary political methods. They have made it absolutely clear that they are not supporters of Communism. They are convinced that violence cannot solve any problem . . . Repressive policy will only aggravate political distemper, promote the purpose of the revolutionaries and destroy whatever influence the friends of British connection and lovers of peace have in the country, and let loose anarchy.

The journal further writes in the same article:—

Among the friends of the British we count Mahatma Gandhi and Pundit Motilal Nehru. We pray most fervently that British statesmen may in time realise the gravity of the situation, and by large-hearted and courageous statesmanship retrieve it before it is too late.

It should be noticed that the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie use Communism and other forms of extremism, by which they mean

revolutionary Nationalism, interchangeably. If it were only for Communism, this fright and hatred of the Nationalist bourgeoisie would not be so remarkable; for, as bourgeoisie they must naturally hate and fear Communism. But, as it is, the object of their fear, hatred and attack is any kind or form of revolution. The Spectre of Communism drives the Indian bourgeoisie into the arms of British Imperialism, thus revealing them as enemies of national revolution.

The reference to Gandhi and Nehru as "friends of the British" is neither accidental nor an exaggeration. Had it been so, it should have been repudiated by the persons concerned. On the contrary, before and since the last meeting of the National Congress, both of them made statements which add a touch of authority to the reference made by the Liberal journal.

A few days after the National Congress had very reluctantly endorsed his compromise resolution on the question of British connection, Gandhi categorically stated to the Press: "My position is very clear. To me Dominion Status means independence. Others have been led, through suspicion of Britain's good faith, to make a distinction between the two." (The *Englishman*, Calcutta.) Here Gandhi makes a declaration of his belief in Britain's good faith. In other words, he is "a friend of the British" as the Liberal journal calls him. One cannot be a friend of the British without automatically being an enemy of the forces antagonistic to British domination. So, Gandhi also is opposed to national revolution, and will denounce any revolutionary struggle as a Communist menace in a critical moment. As regards Motilal Nehru, there is less doubt on this score. The pseudo-Danton of India will not need a guillotine for political elimination, as soon as some real Jacobins appear on the scene. A full-blooded Girondin, he will quickly pass over to his native camp and, true to his class, will fight the revolution.

But let us still see what the out-spoken representatives of the Nationalist bourgeoisie have to say. The Moslem League, which adhered to the common Nationalist platform embodied in the so-called Nehru Report, held its annual meeting simultaneously with the Congress, in opposition to the officially inspired

All-India Moslem Conference. A Maharaja with considerable capital invested in industry was in the chair, and said the following:—

Severance of British connection is a hopelessly unworkable proposition. India's place in the British Commonwealth is a place of undeniable security. Her association with the British Commonwealth is a valuable asset, and it will be folly to destroy this precious connection. There is plenty of room for growth, development and expression of Indian nationalism within the orbit of connection with England.

Abdul Karim, who opened the meeting and proposed the capitalist Maharaja for the chair, said:—

For economic and cultural autonomy Dominion Status will give India all scope we need for the present. It will, therefore, be unwise to fritter away our limited national energy for the chimera of independence.

On the morrow of the annual meeting of the National Congress the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce met, for the first time in its history, in the presence of the Viceroy. The Chairman of the Federation, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, an industrial magnate of Bombay, discoursed on the atmosphere of a threat to law and order, and appealed for legislation checking the revolutionary development of the labour movement. He was one of those who had voted against the anti-Communist Public Safety Bill in the Legislative Assembly. He made a veiled apology for his action, and hinted that when the Government brought up the Bill in the next Parliamentary session, the representatives of the big bourgeoisie would vote for it. Obviously, the intervening events testifying to a radicalisation of the Nationalist Movement essentially under the pressure of the independent revolutionary action of the working-class, had forced a change in the attitude of the Nationalist bourgeoisie. They are now ready to give up the constitutional opposition to imperialist domination.

The feelings of the Nationalist bourgeoisie are expressed from another side—a very extraordinary one. Reviewing the situation in the light of the latest developments the semi-official organ, *Pioneer*, writes:—

Gandhi hopes to guide the revolutionaries into more sober and profitable paths—to keep in check more serious developments. Or it may be that he is endeavouring to enable the British Government to make some gestures, to inaugurate some policy, which will stave off an era of political chaos. Neither Gandhi, nor Motilal Nehru, nor any other leader of the older generation wishes a revival of non-co-operation. Neither Calcutta, nor Bombay can afford to face another period of non-co-operation, and if the threat becomes real, they will be the first to demand of the Government of India a more peaceful solution. If the Governors of India are wise, they will appreciate the position of the moderate politicians . . . The moderate men in this country know that if there is no alteration in the policy, their fate will be an unpleasant one. . . . Let the Viceroy send for Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru (leader of the Liberal Federation) for consultation. If the Viceroy were able to announce to the Legislative Assembly his Majesty the King-Emperor's personal pledge that Dominion Status will be granted to India, there can be little doubt but that the widespread conservative elements will once more rally round the Government. The benefit would be mutual and immediate. The revolutionary movement in the country will be isolated, and there will be a chance of keeping India in the British Commonwealth.

Calcutta and Bombay, that is, the commercial and industrial princes of those cities, speaking through the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce have clearly demonstrated their disapproval of any revolutionary movement, and have indicated to the Viceroy their willingness to co-operate in the suppression of it. And the Viceroy in his speech opening the new session of the Legislative Assembly has reiterated his Britannic Majesty's pledge to grant India self-Government. How soon, he did not say. But certainly not within a year. This he made quite clear. But on the strength of this pledge he trusted that the Assembly would pass the anti-Communist law and possibly other repressive measures directed against the radical elements of the Nationalist Movement. The nervousness of the Nationalist bourgeoisie and

their condemnation of any revolutionary movement have encouraged imperialism to plan repression of the revolutionary movement. And judged by their utterances, the Nationalist bourgeoisie will support the Government in this plan to prove their fitness to wield greater administrative responsibility.

While the big bourgeoisie are voluntarily offering their services to counter-revolution, the petty bourgeois radicals are afraid of the potentiality of the dynamics of the situation which drive them further than they want to go. A tendency to backsliding is to be noticed in their ranks. For example, the *Forward*, organ of the Left Wing, indignantly repudiates the charge made by a die-hard Anglo-Indian journal, that the Congress has abandoned its policy of non-violence and favours revolution. Commenting on the resolution of the Congress the *Englishman*, of Calcutta, correctly observed: "In India, sanctions to enforce a national demand can mean one thing and only one thing—revolution."

The organ of petty bourgeois radicalism, the *Forward*, of Calcutta, replies as follows:—

On a careful analysis of the apparently innocent word "sanction" our contemporary has discovered that it is dangerous verbal dynamite capable of blowing up all law and order to pieces. . . . The news will, of course, come to every Congressman as a surprise, for they are not aware that there has been any change in the Congress creed, or that the Congress had departed from its policy of non-violence. (January 8.)

The next day *Forward* reverts to the subject, and writes:—

Violence has been rightly ruled out by the Congress. The country has to devise an efficacious remedy on lines which may not bring it into conflict with the so-called laws of the country. That is the economic boycott. (January 9.)

Again the day after:—

When Congressmen talked of "sanction", they could not mean anything more serious than pressure of public opinion, economic boycott or non-payment of taxes. Our contemporary had to admit that none of these suggested methods of enforcing



submission from the British Government should carry the implication of violence. (January 10.)

This cowardly attitude of the petty bourgeois radicals is not altogether subjective. It is a reflex of the crystallisation of counter-revolutionary sentiment among the big bourgeoisie. There cannot be any real Jacobinism except under the pressure of the masses. This condition for the bourgeois democratic revolution is maturing in India; but owing to the fact that it happens in an entirely different historical epoch, this condition does not make Jacobins out of the Indian bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it drives them into the camp of counter-revolution.

# The Growth Of The Indian Strike Movement

Percy Glading

During the period 1921-1929 there were 1,729 industrial disputes throughout India, one of which extended to five provinces and another covered three provinces. The total number of workers involved in these disputes was approximately  $3\frac{1}{4}$  million and the aggregate time-loss amounted to  $84\frac{1}{4}$  million days or over 250,000 working-years. Here is the table of disputes given by the Government of Bombay's *Labour Gazette* :—

| Year | Number of disputes | Number of workers involved | Number of working-days lost |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1921 | 326                | 500,351                    | 6,284,426                   |
| 1922 | 278 *              | 435,434                    | 3,272,727                   |
| 1923 | 213                | 301,044                    | 5,051,704                   |
| 1924 | 133                | 312,462                    | 8,730,218                   |
| 1925 | 134                | 270,423                    | 12,578,122                  |
| 1926 | 128                | 186,811                    | 1,027,478                   |
| 1927 | 122 †              | 131,655                    | 2,012,270                   |
| 1928 | 203                | 506,851                    | 31,647,404                  |
| 1929 | 141                | 532,061                    | 12,165,691                  |
|      | <hr/> 1,739        | <hr/> 3,252,146            | <hr/> 84,248,447            |

An examination of this table shows that the number of strikes and the number of workers involved diminishes steadily from the high point of 1921 until 1927, after which the number of strikes

\*One dispute was common to five provinces.

† One dispute was common to three provinces.

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## *The Growth of The Indian Strike Movement*

begin to increase while the number of strikers rapidly mounted. Thus the course of these strikes can be traced as a U-shaped curve reaching its bottom level in 1926 and therefrom rising fairly steeply.

How is this related to the general economic and political situation in India during these years? Clearly there is a direct relation. The year 1921 marked the highest point of the mass Non-Co-operation Movement, which lasted also into 1922. But by the middle and the end of 1922 the movement was being suppressed, and scores of thousands of workers and peasants were cast into British jails. And the years 1923-26 represented the low ebb of the revolutionary tide. They were the years when C. R. Das developed Swarajist parties *inside* the Assemblies and Legislatures; when the masses, *suffering from the memory of Gandhi's betrayal of their movement* in February, 1922, and, *untouched by the trumpery superstructure* of empty Legislative Assemblies, &c., appeared relatively quiescent under their exploitation. But what a quiescence! For even in this ebb of the tide, the extent and duration of the strike movement is much greater when the small size of the Indian proletariat is taken into account than in most European countries in the same period.

The year 1921 wholly belongs to the height of the post-war revolutionary movement throughout the whole world. But the conditions of the colonies and the special effects on India of the decline of British Imperialism are reflected in a remarkable way in the years after 1921. Let us survey the more notable strikes of these "ebb-tide" years, so as to gain some idea of how the Indian proletariat was developing towards militancy.

In 1922 one dispute took place on the East Indian Railway at Tundla and lasted from the first week of February to second week of April, involving over 21,000 workers. The cause of the dispute was that an Indian fireman was assaulted by a European shunter. In this year also 60,000 Bombay cotton mill workers struck in commemoration of the second anniversary of the death of Mr. B. G. Tilak, an old leader of the early Nationalist Movement.

The most important dispute in 1923 occurred at the Ahmedabad Textile Mills over the proposed reduction of 20 per cent in wages.

Forty-three thousand workers employed in fifty-six mills were involved, and the aggregate number of days spent in the dispute were 2,400,000. Another long dispute in this year occurred in the Burma Oil-field, which in the aggregate amounted to 300,000 working-days.

Although the total number of strikes decreased in 1924 the magnitude of single strikes increased. The cotton mill workers of *Bombay were on strike for over two months; some 160,000 workers were involved. The dispute arose over the decision of the Bombay Mill-owners' Association to withhold payment of the annual bonus owing to trade depression. The local Government appealed to a Committee to investigate the cause of the dispute, and the findings of the Committee were in favour of the mill-owners. Prolonged strikes also occurred in the Cawnpore Cotton Mills and among the dock workers of Rangoon.*

The cotton mill workers were again the principal section of the workers involved in the disputes of 1925. The question was one of a 11½ per cent reduction in wages, the argument put forward by the mill-owners being the severe and unprecedented depression. The number of working-days lost in this dispute was nearly 11 million. The workers refused to return to work until the cut in wages was restored. The Viceroy was compelled to remove the cotton excise duty and so help the mill-owners to concede the workers' demands. The railway workers on the North-Western Railway struck against the victimisation of a fitter at the Rawalpindi loco-shops. The strike involved 18,000 workers and lasted from the end of March to the end of June.

The number of disputes in the years 1926-27 were few compared with earlier years. But in 1927, though the number of strikers was less, there was already to be seen a changed outlook amongst the workers. The year 1927 was the turning point, in 1928 the revolutionary spirit of workers again blazed forth.

By 1927 the growing crisis in Indian economy resulting from the decline of British imperialism was becoming more and more evident. Amongst the working class an increasing spirit of militancy showed itself as a result of the rationalisation drive resorted to by the employers in their endeavour to find a way-out of the crisis.

There was an increase in the number of trade union meetings. The agitation being carried on by B. F. Bradley and P. Spratt, two of the English prisoners now on trial at Meerut, met with a more and more favourable hearing. Throughout all India, on the peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie as well as on the workers, the effects of the growing crisis were more and more clearly shown. The growing spirit of revolt found expression in hartals and strikes against the Simon Commission. Thus from the very beginning the great strike movement of 1928 and 1929 took on a political colour. Indeed the difference between the strike wave of 1928-29 and earlier years is not so much what is shown in the figures, big though this difference is, but in the growing political nature of the strikes.

When in 1928 the revolutionary spirit of the workers blazed forth, the total number of disputes during this year was 203, as against 129 in the previous year, and the loss in the working days reached the record figure of 31½ million which was even greater than the total loss of working-days during the whole of the five preceding years.

The general strike of cotton mill workers in Bombay against the rationalisation drive with its new methods, and greater exploitation, lasted in the aggregate over 22½ million working-days.

Other textile disputes occurred at Sholapur and Cawnpore. The wave of revolt was not confined to textile workers alone, but the magnificent spirit of the textile workers of Bombay, who had borne the brunt of severe class struggles in previous years, was an inspiration to the rest of the working class in India. Therefore, it is not surprising to find huge strikes in 1928 at the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur, the East Indian Railway, the Southern Railway, and the Fort Gloster Jute Mills at Bauria in Bengal. The struggles of 1928 marked a new phase in the brutality of the authorities against the strikers. The workers answered this new phase in the development of class-oppression with mass demonstrations and increased picketing. As a consequence this attempt at brutal suppression resulted in much bloodshed.

A review of the whole period, 1921 to 1929, shows that out of a total of 1,739 disputes, the largest number, 808, occurred in the cotton spinning and weaving mills. This industry alone recorded

an aggregate of over 58½ million working-days lost through disputes; the number of workers involved was over one and a third million. Two of these disputes lasted over two years. The capitalist class of India, backed up by the Imperial Government, including the Labour Government in 1924, carried on the programme of the capitalist class in Great Britain, i.e., "The wages of all workers must come down." This applied especially to the cotton spinning and weaving mills.

During this period, 1921-29, of these 808 cotton textile disputes there were 326 directly dealing with wages; 94 relating to "bonus"; 228 come under the heading of "personnel," which means political and sympathetic strikes; 23 over "leave and hours" and 137 due to other unspecified reasons. The workers were successful in 162 of these struggles; partially successful in 91; unsuccessful in 549.

If we examine the total number of disputes for all industries during this period, i.e., 1,739, then we find of these, 783 were directly caused by attacks on wages; 141 related to bonus payments; 399 came under the heading of personnel; 67 leave and hours, and 349 were caused by other reasons which the official report does not classify. The working class by their heroic determination which has been an object lesson to the proletariat of the world were completely successful in 285 disputes; partially successful in 291 disputes, and were driven back or unsuccessful in 1,153 disputes.

The capitalist class of India, fearing this rapid development of the revolutionary working class, used every means at their disposal—in their attempt to crush the future ruling class. Police, Army, Air Force, Bombs, Tanks, Gas and Legislation were the means and methods of attack. The drive of capitalist rationalisation caused by the enormous fall in prices forced the capitalists to savagely attack the already miserable standard of wages of the Indian working-class. Although the cotton and woollen workers have stood the full force of the attack, all other sections of the workers have also had their share of capitalist viciousness.

But the heroic and determined Indian workers have not shirked the issues; although butchered, bludgeoned and murdered, these workers have not faltered. Their leaders have been arrested, jailed and tortured; the reformist leaders have betrayed and deserted the workers as they

do in capitalist countries, but even these acts of treachery have not stopped the onward march of the proletariat of India.

Mass demonstrations and strikes met the Simon Commission in February, 1928. The great strikes of railway workers on the East India and South India Railways were suppressed with much brutality; many were killed and wounded by bayonet charges. And in the latter strike the whole Executive Committee of the Union was arrested, the chief leaders each being sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment.

The greatest strike of the post-war period began in 1928 in the mills of Bombay against the rationalisation drive and a cut in wages; the workers were successful in resisting this and resumed work on the old terms. The Fawcett Commission was set up to report on the conditions of the textile industry. But prior to this Commission issuing their findings, thirty-three Trade Union leaders, men who had been responsible for the successful leadership of previous strikes, were arrested and placed on trial for "Conspiracy against the King Emperor". Of these thirty-one working class fighters have now for the last fifteen months stood for trial at Meerut.

Anti-labour legislation has been introduced; a "Trades Disputes Act" was passed, making sympathetic strikes illegal, and going beyond the British Act of 1927. Public Safety Ordinances have been put into operation which enable the Government to deport from India any British subject helping the Indian workers in their struggles. The Ordinance also sanctioned the confiscation of moneys sent in support of the Indian workers on strike. Press Acts have been introduced, and also various Ordinances issued by the Viceroy—the real despotic head of the Imperialist Government—acting under the instructions of MacDonald and the social-fascist Labour Government.

But all this has not deterred the Indian masses, imprisoned, butchered and murdered by the Imperialist Governments of Tories, Liberals and Labour. These workers repudiated their old leaders, found new class-conscious fighters during the class battles, and have set up new revolutionary working class unions. These new forces, which have been created on the field of class battle, have now become the driving force in the revolutionary struggle in India.

## India—Calcutta Jute Mills Strike

The General Strike which occurred at the jute mills of Calcutta is the direct result of the attempt on the part of the jute millowners to introduce a sixty-hour week.

In November last the Jute Mills Association at one of their meetings decided to work all the mills that are under their management and members of that Association for sixty hours per week in place of fifty-four without any increase in wages and bonus; this was to be put into operation on July 1.

The Jute Mills have been in a prosperous condition, their profits in 1928 amounting to Rs. 7.23 crores (£5½ millions) against 6.67 crores (£5 millions) in 1927. (*Indian Textile Journal* for August, 1929.)

To resist this attack the jute workers had been making preparations by collecting funds. Frequent conferences had been held between the leaders (Kankinarrah Labour Union) and the employers prior to the introduction of the new system.

On July 6 the weavers of the Alliance (managing agents: Messrs. Begg, Dunlop & Co.) and Meghna Jute Mills (agents: Messrs. Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co.) and the spinners of Barrackpore Jute Mills (agents: Messrs. George Henderson & Co.) struck work on the question of increase of bonus and overtime. Between 30,000 and 40,000 were involved.

Immediately the leaders of the Union, L. Hussain and S. Prasad Shah, Vice-President and General Secretary respectively, made vigorous efforts to induce the workers to resume work, and at a meeting of the weavers a resolution was passed to the effect



that they would work fifty-four hours a week until the mill authorities paid the extra bonus for the sixty-hour week on the same rate as they were now paid for fifty-four hours. The large majority of the jute workers refrained from working on the Saturday in protest against the introduction of the sixty-hour system and the discontent grew until on July 24,—5,000 weavers of the Alliance, Waverley, Craig and Meghna Mills struck work.

These marched in procession to the Alexandra Mill with the object of organising a sympathetic strike, but the police, who had been drafted in, prevented them. Within a few days the Alexandra workers joined the strike.

The strike spread in a sporadic fashion. Police repression intensified and on July 29, K. Sen, the General Secretary of the Bengal Jute Workers' Union, and a number of workers were arrested and kept in jail for some time.

By August 3,—70,000 were out in the Jagaddal and Kankinarras area and 5,000 at Barrackpore. Brisk picketing was carried on while Gurkha armed guards paraded the area "guarding" the mills.

Several incidents were reported of police attacks; at Barrackpore several workers were injured by police charges, the Eastern Frontier Rifles being called in to "maintain order".

Miss Das Gupta, at an informal conference called by the District Magistrate of Barrackpore of the millowners and Labour leaders, stated that she was prepared to call off the strike if the management of the single-shift mills complied with the Union's demands and sanctioned bonuses at the old rates and gave assurance that none of the mills working the double-shift system would adopt the single-shift working and that forty-eight hours' working would be introduced as soon as possible. This was turned down by the owners.

Orders were promulgated by the authorities, directed mainly against rank and file workers, prohibiting meetings and demonstrations, and a number of worker leaders were arrested. The strike situation became more critical and serious criticism was being made of some of the Union leaders and others who are playing the part of "leaders". It was reported that the police had to

defend the house of M. L. Hussein, M.L.C., from attacks by the strikers, and Miss Das Gupta was later deprived of her official position as President of the Bengal Jute Workers' Union.

Despite the orders prohibiting demonstrations, the strikers of Jagaddal marched, some 5,000 strong, towards the Gourepore Mill at Naihati with the idea of calling upon them to join the strike. A large band of Kabulis, who carry on the business of money-lending (at an extortionate rate of interest), interfered with the strikers and whipped out their knives and attacked them. A free fight ensued which resulted in the loss of seven lives and a large number being severely injured. The police raided the homes of the mill workers and arrested about 243 in this area a few days later and meetings of every description were prohibited.

By August 10 over 200,000 were on strike and a few days later the paint-shop workers at Gourepore and the Britannia Engineering Works joined in a sympathetic strike.

On August 16, following a series of negotiations between the Millowners and the Jute Workers' Union, a settlement was reached after about thirty-eight days' strike situation.

The Committee of the Indian Jute Mills Association agreed to recommend to the Association the following terms of settlement:—

1. Proportionate increment should be given on the total earnings of the workers retaining the rate of bonus, and all "Khorakis" should be paid as before when mills worked fifty-four hours in the week;
2. Wages should be paid for the strike and lock-out period;
3. There should be no victimisation or corporal punishment;
4. A board should be appointed to inquire into the workmen's grievances;
5. All cases should be withdrawn excepting murder cases.

With the calling off of the strike a new development took place in several Jute Mills in the Hooghly and Budge Budge District. These were unaffected during the Jute Mill Strike, but now demanded the same terms as offered to the strikers and by August 22 about 45,000 were immediately affected in the new strike.

## The G.I.P. Railway Strike

### INDIA

During the last two years, from time to time, the railway trade unions in India have, by petitions and deputations, placed the grievances of the railway workers before the authorities.

The Great Indian Peninsular (G.I.P.) Railwaymen's Union, the largest Railway Union, interviewed the agent of the railways on November 7, 1928, and placed before him a series of demands. The reply of the agent was considered by the Union as unsatisfactory. The leaders of the Union decided to strengthen the ranks of the Union and prepare themselves for strike action, if necessary. Joglekar, Bradley, Alwe and Nimbkar were actually conducting an organisational tour on the line when they were arrested in March, 1929, and are still in jail at Meerut. Charged with "conspiracy against the king", they are now being tried, after fifteen months' convict treatment.

In May, 1929, a deputation of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation met Sir George Rainy, and presented demands. Actually nothing came of it, and in December, 1929, the G.I.P. Union decided to call a strike to take place on February 4, 1930.

Notice of this decision was sent to the agent who interviewed the leaders in January, but no settlement could be obtained.

The chief demands were: increase in wages a minimum of £2 5s. 0d. a month; an eight-hour day; and the immediate redress of other minor grievances. The wages paid amount to between 16s. and 19s. per month and they work from ten to, in a large number of cases, fourteen and sixteen hours per day.

On February 4, there was a complete stoppage at the Parel and Matunga workshops, and a large number had struck in Sholapur, Dhond, Manmad and Igatpuri. The strike spread quickly until by the end of the week, according to the Press reports, 125,000 rail strikers were out along the line.

On February 6, Kandalkar, Secretary of the Girni Kamgar Union of the Textile Workers, who had been elected captain of the "Volunteer" (pickets) force, was arrested at Kurla. Lalji Pendse was arrested for defying the order prohibiting meetings, and a large number of strikers in various centres.

Ruikar, President of the Union, wired to MacDonald, Wedgwood Benn, and Fenner Brockway, stating that 120,000 rail workers were on strike, enumerating the demands and requesting "intervention under the Trade Disputes Act".

Ginwala, the President of the G.I.P., and Deshpande, the Secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress (A.I.T.U.C.), wired to the Workers' Welfare League of India, requesting financial help to support the strike. (The League immediately issued an appeal to the British workers.)

Meanwhile repressive measures<sup>f</sup> were being employed by the authorities to try and break the strike. In several centres the strikers were evicted from their quarters, the women strenuously resisting. Convicts from the Nasik Road Jail were brought out to work as blacklegs. This was admitted by Benn in the House of Commons.

On February 24, the All-India Railway Federation General Council met and elected a deputation to meet the Government in order to obtain a settlement and urged all affiliated Unions to prepare for direct action, if necessary.

Reports came pouring in from all the centres that the strike was solid and that dislocation of service was general.

On March 1, Chamanlal, Giri and S. C. Joshi, officials of the A.I.R. Federation, met representatives of the Railway Board (No member of the G.I.P. Union was present) and settled the strike. The only *terms* reported were—No victimisation. Giri went to Nagpur and Joshi to Bombay to call off the strike.

Ginwala, the President of the Union, immediately repudiated the so-called "settlement", stating that all the demands must be granted before resuming work and severely criticising Giri and Co., not even communicating the terms of agreement to the officials of the G.I.P. Union. "These gentlemen", he states, "were only deputed to confer with the Commerce member, and were not authorised to finally accept any terms without previously consulting the Union. . . . Mr. Chamanlal wanted to play the part of the officious middleman; neither Mr. Giri nor Mr. Joshi have the least right to arrive at any settlement behind our backs".

Ruikar concurred with the sentiments expressed by Ginwala but S. C. Joshi in a statement in the Press declared that he is shocked to hear that Ruikar professes ignorance of what happened at Delhi and states definitely that Ruikar knew exactly what had happened and charges Ruikar with trying to arrange a meeting with the authorities at Delhi so that he would be able to take "credit for the settlement, trumpeting it among the workers and heralding his absolute leadership among the workers".

Ruikar at a strikers' meeting in Parel on the 5th advised them to accept the terms offered by the authorities and then prepare for another strike after two months if the other demands had not been conceded. On the other hand, at a mass meeting at Manmad, Kulkarni, Vice-President of the A.I.T.U.C. (the General Council of the A.I.T.U.C. had thrown all its weight into the fight of the G.I.P. workers), himself a rail worker, stated that the terms offered were "humiliating", and the meeting voted unanimously for the continuance of the strike.

On the same day the Central Strike Committee passed a long resolution describing the reply of Sir George Rainy as a "unique victory, though not coming up to the minimum demands", but . . . "express anxiety" that thousands are being victimised. In conclusion it stated that the meeting "is of opinion that the strike cannot be called off unless a definite assurance is given either by the agents of the G.I.P. or the Railway Board that all strikers be reinstated either before March 15, or any date fixed for resumption of duty".

On March 12, Deshpande, the Secretary of the A.I.T.U.C., organised a huge workers' demonstration in Bombay. It rallied the workers and solidified the ranks in Bombay, after the attempt on the part of the "Rights" and "Lefts", to break the strike. The "Lefts" were forced by the attitude taken up by the workers to fall into line. Instead of advocating a militant policy the Strike Committee suggested the organisation of "satyagraha" (passive resistance, lying on the line and before the stations), but actually held back hoping that the authorities would reply to the demands made.

The authorities meanwhile had obtained a number of blacklegs, paying them a higher wage and locking out the strikers. At Bhusaval 90 per cent of the strikers were refused entry when they offered themselves for work after the "settlement", the same was reported at Matunga, Parel, Itarsi and other places. In some places the strike was reported as being "firm".

It was only on March 18, that the Strike Committee declared definitely for the continuance of the strike. Reports were coming through of a more determined stand being made by the strikers.

Police repression became more severe, strikers in practically every centre were being beaten up, shootings took place in Bombay and Kurla; hundreds were injured and hundreds more arrested.

By the beginning of April the situation had become serious, S. C. Joshi and others again began cabling to the authorities to "mediate" and that the "Delhi agreement had been flouted". The Prime Minister and Wedgwood Benn were also cabled to, but no notice was taken. Further a distinct cleavage began in the ranks of the leaders of the strike. S. C. Joshi, Chamanlal and Giri had been repudiated by the strikers and had been attacked by Ruikar and Ginwala.

Ginwala went to Delhi to try and obtain a settlement, and in a statement issued later repudiated what had been said by the Railway Board and by Chamanlal, that the G.I.P. Union was Communist in character. He also appealed to Joshi, Chamanlal, Giri, Kirk and others to sink their differences and gather round the banner of the A.I.T.U.C.

Deshpande, the Secretary of the A.I.T.U.C., issued leaflets calling for support from the other railway workers and calling for a general strike in support of the G.I.P. workers, but this was repudiated by Ginwala.

The lack of cohesive organisational force was quite evident, and the slippery tactics of Ruikar and Ginwala helped to strengthen the position of the railway agent and the authorities.

On April 28, it was announced in the Press that Purandare, the General Secretary of the G.I.P. Railway Union, had sent a wire to the agent stating that the strike was suspended on March 13, and called off on April 15; that the railway authorities were harassing the strikers by not reinstating them and threatening evictions from their quarters; and requests the agent to cancel the evictions and order the reinstatement of the strikers immediately.

Later an appeal for financial help was issued, in which it states that nearly 29,000 railway workers are out in Bombay and other parts. It is quite clear that the so-called settlement brought about by the A.I. Railwaymen's Federation created uncertainty in the minds of the strikers. The strike collapsed not because of the failure to respond on the part of the workers, but due to the failure on the part of the leaders to strengthen the strike from the outset; a very faulty leadership on the part of a few which amounted to sabotage. The 29,000 have been victimised because of the part taken by them during the strike.

## INDO-CHINA

### **The Revolt Spreads**

So far from crushing the unrest in Indo-China, the tactics of French Imperialism have only succeeded in fanning the flames of revolt, until a situation has been created which has many points of resemblance with both the Chinese and the Indian Revolutionary Movements. There is the same alliance between Nationalists and Communists which was a feature of the earlier stages of these movements and similar forms of struggle—e.g., non-payment of taxes, civil disobedience, and other forms of passive resistance are growing up alongside of the older methods of strikes and demonstrations.

Further, the movement is not confined to one centre, but has spread right through the whole country, and outbreaks are reported in Tongking, Annam and Cochin China, distinct in origin, but all connected by the common purpose to free the country from the yoke of French imperialism.

Demonstrations of workers took place in the first week in June at numerous different centres; in every case revolutionary slogans were used, such as "The Factories for the Workers", "The Land for the Peasants", "Down with Imperialism", &c., and resolutions were passed refusing to pay taxes, and demanding the division of the land among the peasants.

At Vinh-Long soldiers charged the demonstrators, and those arrested were sentenced without trial to prison for periods of three to five years; at Chomoi the troops fired on the crowds and a number were killed, and in Cho-lon province, at Phu-Lam, over thirty were killed by the police, when a police post was attacked by demonstrators and some Government buildings destroyed; at Hoe-Mon the French Commissioner's house was invaded, and the French manager of the Yunnan Railway was shot at Hanoi.

An extraordinary example of the methods of French imperialism was the action of the French consul at Hokow, who ordered and secured the arrest of a number of Annamite refugees in Chinese territory, and threatened reprisals when the Chinese authorities at first refused to hand them over.

A similar event occurred at Vietry in Taiken, where a French official denounced certain refugees who had escaped into China; the Chinese population rescued them from their French captors, and the infuriated Tongkingese attacked and injured the official, an action which was followed by bloody reprisals.



## **The Indian Round-Table Conference**

**Shapurji Saklatvala**

And so the Round-Table Conference has come at last, after a dozen years of travail, of intrigue, of moves and countermoves, but true to its original prophecy of coming with the accompaniment of bloodshed, bombing, daily baton charges and arrests by the score.

In the dark days of the World-Capitalist War, Lloyd George's intriguing mind was the one constant glimmer of hope and eventual escape for the capitalist land-grabbers and Imperialist war-lords of Britain. Round him came drawn lesser satellites with a second-rate genius for plotting and intrigue. Declaration to the Jews to repossess the Promised Land, and counter-pledges of freedom to the Arabs, alluring promises to Irish Americans to get into the War and Black and Tans in Dublin and Cork. Arthur Henderson's Mission to Kerensky to keep up the blood-bath and promises of peace and plenty to the Poles and Czechs, and finally—India. A Round-Table Conference was to be set up somewhere to do something somehow. One Lionel Curtis went across to India, to promise good things to the Indians in return for their share in the bloody orgy of world power for Britain and British financiers. Upto his bosom he took James Meston, a "sympathetic" official, and William Marris, the Inspector-General of Prisons in India, to hammer out a charter of freedom and liberty. Mysterious documents were prepared and printed with the utmost secrecy, and some benevolent "Round-Table" movement was preparing Britain to grant something to the Indians in response to their clamour for Bread and Liberty.

It was mentioned in the secret document that the Indian Princes and Bourgeoisie would be placated with political sops, a few high offices and "Reforms," and talk of "Dominion" goals, but for the masses, for the hungry and exploited workers and for the enslaved peasantry there would have to be application of "law and order," stricter discipline and ultimately unavoidable bloodshed. When this "Round-Table" Magna Charta for India became prematurely known, Meston apologised, Marris explained away his part, Curtis got away from the Indian public gaze and there emerged a smug and well-polished document as the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, and the "Round-Table" was driven into obscurity.

The "Reforms" came on with all the trumpet blowing of hollow Hypocritical Parliamentary Democracy. The Indian National Congress, as predicted by the "Round-Table" of Lionel Curtis, walked into its snare and sent a weighty deputation of which the ornamental leader was Tilak and the brain power was Vithalbhai Patel. When, at a public meeting of Indians in London, I moved an amendment to reject all Parliamentary Reforms, to severely boycott the proposed new Legislative Assembly and Councils, and to get on with the work of organising Labour and the Peasantry towards the establishment of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic, I was denounced and defeated, and after a lot of "buts" and "ifs" and bluff and thunder the Congress leaders did in fact accept the Reforms, as a germinal start of Dominion Status. The Indian Proletariat had to pay for it with their blood in order to fit themselves for a place "within the Empire", and there followed the butchery at Amritsar, the Rowlatt Acts, the massacre of the Moplas and shootings at Bombay, Jamshedpur, Ahmedabad and other industrial centres.

The Congress accepted, rejected, again accepted and then once more rejected the Reforms. They saw no inherent objection to a system of ruling the peasants and workers from above through a dictatorship of plutocracy, but they mainly attacked the system of dyarchy. There was no cry of Land for the People, but for remission of tax on land-owners, rich as well as poor, there was no stand for a human wage of seven rupees a day instead of seven annas for the industrial serf, but there was a surging demand for tariffs, protective

duties and safe-guarding of dividends. Three or four people picturesquely renounced British titles and 300 to 400 more begged for them and acquired them with gratification and gratitude twice a year. The need of organising the masses and working for a peasants' revolution was distinctly felt, but the dread of the ultimate power of workers and peasants over a society of vested interests made the Congress leaders decide to go so far and no further, and the first great betrayal at Bardoli was the result.

The bewildered politicians thought of another "Round-Table Conference." but different in kind from what Lionel Curtis and the Inspector-General of Prisons had devised, though not different in nature. The main idea prevalent in the minds of Indian politicians in 1924 and 1925 was that it was dangerous to organise masses and to lead them to a revolt to establish mass freedom as against imperialist terrorism, for after all, imperialism was only an extended and intense form of capitalism.

It was, therefore, considered impolitic to organise a nation-wide fight socially, economically and politically against the imperialist boss, and it was considered safer and more diplomatic to get round a table with the enemy of the masses and to come to a new compromise, mainly for abolishing dyarchy without destroying British Imperialism. The British imperialists soon saw through the self-confessed weakness in this proposal of the Delhi Assembly for a Round-Table Conference; they saw in it the Indian bourgeoisie's resolve not to "play with fire" in the shape of a workers' and peasants' movement. So after a couple of years of defiance, bluff and palaver the British Imperialists produced the Simon Commission, and when unsuccessful in placating political leaders, tried to attach to it an Indian counterpart of chosen men from the Assembly at Delhi.

In the meanwhile, the mass spirit was mobilising and mass determination was hardening. The strikers on railways, in cotton mills, in docks and in mines were showing a new spirit, an inherent organisational strength of their own, and the workers began to march on with a swing and a jolt that dazed their bosses. The Indian leaders produced an exclusively Indian Round-Table Conference of their own to minimise their own internal differences, and with an

unexpected harmony and forensic ability, they did produce the Nehru Report as a forestalling of and counterblast to the expected Simon Report. The Nehru Report did make the Simon Report a discredited document in advance.

The workers and peasants saw more value in the Girni Kamgar (Millworkers') Union than in any other organisation, they were being helped to understand that the Tax Gatherer and the Rent Collector were both one common enemy, and the Police Officer and Mill Manager stood united together against the right of the workers, and so did the money-lender and the bailiff with his eviction warrants. The men who were soon to become the Meerut Prisoners spelt a more immediate and effective danger to the British Raj than the Nehru Committee or the Congress camp of those days, and with fixed bayonets and trumped-up charges they were put under arrest and still continue to be so after 18 months.

The Congress leaders saw the gathering force of mass opinion, and though in their annual resolution they proclaimed themselves ready to be partners in a terrorist, militarist, land-grabbing, exploiting Empire, they put it forward as a revolutionary sounding ultimatum with a 12 months' limit,

The Congress came out with a separatist demand, under the old leaders with the added new blood of Jawaharlal Nehru, but this time led more from the bottom than from the top. The campaign that was launched out as a pacifist prayer-reciting movement of holy resisters to technical forms of law, soon developed into a fighting movement, and Chittagong, Mymensingh, Peshawar and Sholapur became the landmarks of the people's real revolt.

The mutiny of the Gharwal troops and the open attack of the Afridis gave a formidable appearance to the Congress movement, which in itself under its orthodox leadership would have confined itself to experimental technical breaches of the law. Strenuous efforts were made by MacDonald and Irwin to restore the pacifist leadership of the Congress to its predominance, but no sooner did the leaders seek for rapprochement with Irwin than the push from behind proved too strong.

MacDonald and Irwin had to invoke the aid of the twice-killed Round-Table Conference. It was to have the appearance of the

Nehru Round-Table, but it was to have the Imperial nature of the Curtis-Marris Round Table of a dozen years ago. And so here we have it !

Three blind mice ! See how they run !! They sit around a circular table. MacDonald, the Great Moghal, and his British Courtiers occupy the centre. Around them sit a Princely India, a Mahomedan India, and a British India, divided into a dozen different interests. The King, in his speech, gives to the Simon Report a place which no one else is expected to give it at the Conference. Then poor Irwin is forced to issue an unintelligible dispatch to unsay what he has said in the past, a document which is framed by at least five different minds.

There come the Princes with a strange claim. If King George himself will dare to come out tomorrow to assert that he is on the British throne not by the consent and will of the people but by a treaty of support from a foreign monarch, he will discover that to be the quickest way of losing it. Here sits a Labour Prime Minister to say to the 600 Princes of India, that their subjects, a mere trifle of 70,000,000 human beings, count for nothing, but it is the British Imperial power that will keep them upon their throne to bleed and torture their subjects in order to extort wealth out of their toil.

A Parliamentary representation of Britain quickly offers to a bunch of hand-picked place-hunters two alternative systems: Federal or Unitary. A Unitary system may mean an openly-elected Parliament by the common people. The Unitary system is mentioned only to be killed. It did not even receive the importance of condemnation, as in this august assembly of imperialist buffoons from Britain and India, there has not been one person found to advocate the system of a Central-Legislature freely and entirely elected by the people.

A liberal from India, a Conservative Prince from India, a Tory peer of Britain all *sotto voce* decide upon a Federal System.

In the past, if a Prince dared to deliver a political speech, he was threatened with dethronement, and the Gaekwar had been the worst sufferer. These very princes have been brought here to-day with rebel speeches prepared for them by their English staffs to impress upon India that their advent into the body politic would be an asset.

The idea of ruling India through native agencies and princes with an imperialist European over-lordship, is not a new one. Dupleix, the French conqueror of India, was very fond of it.

So here will be a Federal Council for India, say of 200 members, of whom 50 might be Princes, then 50 would be Mahomedan landlords, feudal chiefs and luminaries in higher professions, 25 would be nominated puppets to safeguard the interest of the depressed classes, 15 or 20 would safeguard European investments, the rest would be divided among Hindu millionaires, landlords, Parsi merchants, and bright lawyers. There would be three or four Government puppets to protect the interest of Indian Labour.

The main purpose of this Conference, almost the only one, is to lay the foundations of a Federal System as the most effective way of excluding the masses. The Princes and the Mahomedans are to be the trump cards. The capitalist papers are openly advocating the acceptance of the "Moslem Charter," which is being forged behind the scenes. This Moslem corruption serves another unexpected purpose at the present moment. The leading Islamic representatives are clearly warned to keep off the Palestine question, and if they dare to espouse the Arab cause they are threatened with the complete withdrawal of the "gifts" for Indian Moslems. Of course, if the Arabs are crushed, and the Afridis and the brave tribesmen are once bombed into slavery, the Indian Moslems and Hindu politicians, it is calculated, could easily be kept in subjugation for another century.

In the meanwhile, there are reports of daily shootings and imprisonment in India. Who are those thus dealt with ? They are not any of the privileged minorities ; they are the completely ignored majority.

The Round-Table Conference is to give a megaphonic expression to the rights of privileges and interests, and like the proverbial ostrich, buries its head in the sand in order to ignore the very existence of 280 millions of suffering and enslaved humanity, living or dying on 6d. a day income.

Constitutions framed in London, and agreements for the division of the spoils arrived at by smug sycophants of a foreign ruler will not affect the mass mentality. The workers and peasants will rise,

they are rising, as indeed they have risen. The banner of their revolt will soar above the din of political manœuvres, and the inevitable mass revolution will sweep all before it. Bombs and bullets, bayonets and poison gas will some day be discovered by the British proletariat to be all the work of their hands, and some day their conscience will prevent them from slaying their oriental comrades.

The Viceroy's prisons are as full as those of the Czars and his cup of violence has become full to overflowing. MacDonald and Wedgwood Benn are disgracing even the spirit of a Kerensky; they are more the Rasputins attached to an unwary throne. The Indian Round-Table Conference in London seems like the Culminating Act.

The desperate gamblers are now trying their last throw. It is MacDonald's last chance to save the Labour Government, the Princes' last chance to stick to ill-gotten wealth, the Indian Politicians' last chance to escape from a Workers' and Peasants' Revolution ! But will they ?

# **Joint Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India**

## **PART I**

### **Main Tasks of the Indian Revolution**

The Indian people is groaning under the yoke and the exploitation of British imperialism. Relying upon their political and economic supremacy, and squeezing billions of rupees year by year out of the miserable national income of India, the blood-thirsty imperialists have brought the toiling masses of the people to a state of famine, hopeless poverty, intolerable slavery and mass extinction as a people.

With all the power of the State in its hands, controlling the main branches of industry, railways, sea and river transport, banks and credit system, the greater part of the land, forests, and the irrigation system, British imperialism has retarded and still obstructs the economic development of our country in every way, supporting and relying upon all that is backward and retrograde in town and country.

The supremacy of British imperialism is the basis of the backwardness, poverty and endless suffering of our people. Only by the merciless and violent destruction of the political economic supremacy of the British imperialism will the working masses of India succeed in rising to their feet, achieving their independence, and creating conditions requisite for their further development, and for the reconstruction of society in the interests of the workers and peasants, and with the purpose of developing further towards socialism.



In the enslavement of the Indian people British imperialism relies upon the native princes, the landlords, the money-lenders and the merchants, utilising the assistance of the national bourgeoisie. The system of land ownership by the landlords, native princes and money-lenders, and relics of serfdom in the land system of India (and consequently in all India's social and political institutions) represent the main bulwark of British supremacy.

In order to destroy the slavery of the Indian people and emancipate the working-class and the peasants from the poverty which is crushing them down, it is essential to win the independence of the country and to raise the banner of agrarian revolution, which would smash the system of landlordism surviving from the middle ages and would cleanse the whole of the land from all this medieval rubbish. An agrarian revolution, against British capitalism must be the basis of the revolutionary emancipation of India.

Linked up as it is the system of landlordism and usury, and terrified at the thought of a revolutionary insurrection by the toiling masses, the capitalist class has long ago betrayed the struggle for independence of the country and the radical solution of the agrarian problem. Its present "opposition" represents merely manoeuvres with British imperialism, calculated to swindle the mass of the toilers and at the same time to secure the best possible terms of compromise with the British robbers. The assistance granted to British imperialism by the capitalist class and its political organisation, the National Congress, takes the shape at the present time of a consistent policy of compromise with British imperialism at the expense of the people, it takes the form of disorganisation of the revolutionary struggle of the masses and the preservation of the system of imperialism, including the native states, the system of landlordism and the reinforced exploitation, jointly with the Imperialism of the mass of the people, of the working-class in particular. The greatest threat to the victory of the Indian revolution is the fact that great masses of our people still harbour illusions about the National Congress, and have not realised that it represents a class organisation of the capitalists working against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses of our country.

The policy of Gandhism, on which the programme of the Congress is founded, uses the cloak of vague phrases about love, meekness, modest and hardworking existence, lightening the burden of the peasantry, the national unity, the *special historic mission of spiritualism, etc.* But under this cloak it preaches and defends the interests of the Indian capitalists, the inevitability and wisdom of the division of society into rich and poor, eternal social inequality and exploitation. That ism it preaches (serves) the interests of the capitalist development of India on the bone and sweat of the working masses of the people, in alliance with world Imperialism. The National Congress betrayed and disorganised the struggle of the toilers in 1919-21. The National Congress supported the manufacturers against the workers during the textile strike and in fact assisted in the passing of anti-labour legislation. The National Congress refused to support the fight of railwaymen against British imperialism, suggesting that they should ask Lord Irwin and MacDonald to arbitrate. The National Congress opposed the peasantry in their struggle against the money-lenders, big landlords and the native princes.

Jointly with the Liberals, the landlords and the manufacturers, the National Congress has produced the anti-popular Nehru Constitution, in which it declared the necessity of preserving the landlords, the rajahs and the money-lenders, remaining as a junior partner in the British Empire and leaving supreme authority in the hands of the British Viceroy and the Governor-General.

The National Congress issued the Delhi Manifesto supporting Gandhi's eleven points, which represented the moderate programme of the Chambers of Commerce, and similar associations. It carried on negotiations with the Liberals in prison trying behind the scenes to come to an understanding with the British Government; and so forth. The National Congress, and particularly its "Left" wing, have done and are doing all in their power to restrain the struggle of the masses within the framework of the British Imperialist Constitution and legislation.

In this connection, world history and the lessons of the class struggle in India prove that only the leadership of the working-class can ensure the fulfillment of the historic task of emancipating

the Indian people, abolishing national slavery, sweeping aside all the fetters which check national development, confiscating the land and effecting far-reaching democratic reconstruction of revolutionary character. The working-class of India, organised by the industrial process itself and by the class struggle, will under the leadership of its Communist vanguard, perform its historic tasks of organising the scattered masses of peasantry and town poor for struggle against British domination and landlordism.

But in order to organise the mass of the workers, in order to rally the proletariat as a distinct class force, conscious of its distinct class interests and fighting for the leadership of the national movement of emancipation, in order to bring about the revolutionary alliance of the working-class and the peasantry, in order to liberate the working-class, the peasantry and the town poor, from the hands of national reformism, and direct their revolutionary struggle towards an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution, for all these purposes, the working-class requires its own proletarian Communist Party.

The Communist Party of India is the party of the working-class, the final aim of which is the achievement of socialism and ultimately of complete Communism. The Programme of the Communist Party of India is totally different from the programmes and ideas of the other parties and groups, which are parties of the capitalist class and the petty bourgeoisie, not excepting the national revolutionary parties. While the latter are striving for the development of capitalism in India, the Communist Party is consistently and firmly fighting for a socialist path of development. While the national revolutionary groups are fighting for bourgeois rule and a bourgeois form of government, the Communist Party of India is fighting for the democratic dictatorship of the working-class and the peasantry, a Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Government in India.

The only form of government which can safeguard the interests of the workers, peasants and toilers generally is the Soviets. The Soviets set up in the course of the revolutionary revolt of the working masses, as insurrectionary bodies for the overthrow of British supremacy, will be the sole genuine seats of authority,

elected directly in the factories, works, villages, etc., ensuring confiscation of the land and the satisfaction of the vital needs of the mass of the people. The Soviet Government alone will be capable for ensuring the national minorities, their right to self-determination including that of complete separation and at the same time achieve the maximum unity in the ranks of the toilers of various nationalities, engaged in common revolutionary struggle against the enemies of the Indian revolution. The Soviet Government alone will be able to effect an alliance with the world proletariat for the purpose of defending the liberty and the achievements of the Indian revolution against the attacks of world Imperialism, and the Indian exploiters. Only such a government will be able to make an alliance with all other Soviet states against international Imperialism and for the final victory of the world revolution.

Firmly and courageously, and notwithstanding any sacrifices the Communist Party will defeat, the disorganising and treacherous work of the national reformists, it will organise the masses of the workers and peasants and lead them to victory over Imperialism and take the lead in the further march towards socialism.

Adopting these as its guiding principles, the Communist Party of India advances the following main objects for the present stage of the Indian revolution:

1. The complete independence of India by the violent overthrow of British rule. The cancellation of all debts. The confiscation and nationalisation of all British factories, banks, railways, sea and river transport and plantations.
2. Establishment of a Soviet Government. The realisation of the right of national minorities to self-determination including separation. Abolition of the native states. The creation of an Indian Federal workers' and peasants' Soviet Republic.
3. The confiscation without compensation of all the lands, forests and other property of the landlords, ruling princes, churches, the British Government, officials and money-lenders, and handing over for use to the toiling peasantry. Cancellation of slave agreements and all the indebtedness of the peasantry to money-lenders and banks.

4. The 8-hour working day and the radical improvement of conditions of labour. Increase in wages and State maintenance for the unemployed.

The Communist Party of India will fight for these main demands which express the interests of the mass of the people, and the achievement of which will create the conditions for and render possible further development in the direction of the building of a Socialist State of Society in India. At the same time, with the object of developing the mass revolutionary struggle and revolutionary education of the mass of the toilers, the Communist Party of India puts forward partial demands, the struggle for which will facilitate the mobilisation of the mass of the people in revolutionary insurrection for its emancipation.

## **PART II**

### **The Fight for Partial Demands of the Revolutionary Movement**

The C.P. of India considers that the sole and historically tested means of winning independence, carrying out the agrarian revolution and achieving democratic reconstruction, is the path of revolutionary struggle of the widest possible mass of people, developing into a general national armed insurrection against the British exploiters and all their allies in our country.

The propaganda of non-violence of Mr. Gandhi and other leaders is intended to prevent a general national armed insurrection of the toiling masses against the British rule. By his own confession in his autobiography Gandhi took part in the armed suppression of the rising of the Zulu peasants in Africa and assisted the British robbers in their fight against the German capitalists for the right to exploit colonial peoples. And to-day Gandhi tells the peasants and workers of India that they have no right to and must not revolt against their exploiters. He tells them this at the very time when the British robbers are making open war on the Indian people in the North West Province and throughout the country.

The toiling masses will understand this double game of the National Congress. The workers and peasants of India will not

give up their right to smash the whole feudal and imperialist system of exploitation, and their right to bring about the violent overthrow of the British rule.

The emancipation of India cannot be achieved by a terrorist movement. The supporters of the terrorist movement of our country do not see and do not believe in the struggle of the broad masses of the people and do not understand the connection between the agrarian revolution, the struggle of the working-class and the overthrow of British domination. They try by brave and single-handed terrorist acts to achieve victory over British imperialism.

While recognising the devotion and self-sacrifice of the terrorists in the cause of the national emancipation of India, the Communist Party declares that the road to victory is not the method of individual terror but the struggle and the revolutionary armed insurrection of the widest possible masses of the working-class, the peasantry, the poor of the towns and the Indian soldiers, around the banner and under the leadership of the Communist Party of India.

The most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution is the agitation carried on by the "Left" elements of the National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, Ginwala and others. Under the cloak of revolutionary phrasology they carry on the bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the masses, and help the Congress to come to an understanding with British imperialism. Particularly blackguardly and harmful is the part played by the national reformists in the labour movement in which they try in every possible way to substitute the methods of class collaboration for the method of class struggle, doing their best to bring the workers under the influence of the ideas and the organisations of the Indian and British exploiters. The treacherous part played by the National Congress as regards the peasantry has once again shown itself in the appeal of the "Left" Congress leaders to the British Governor of Bengal to send troops to crush the peasant revolts at Kishoreganj. In these circumstances some of the "Left" national reformists (supporters of Roy and others) who realise that the masses are

becoming disillusioned in the Congress, have cleverly put forward the advice to "win" the National Congress from within. Normally their object is to revolutionise the Congress; in reality it is to restore the prestige of the Congress by replacing the old treacherous leaders by new leaders who are no better than the old.

The exposure of the "Left" Congress leaders who may again undertake to set up a new party or organisation like the former League of Independence, in order once again to bamboozle the mass of the workers, is the primary task of our Party. Ruthless war on the "Left" national reformists is an essential condition if we are to isolate the latter from the workers and mass of the peasantry, and mobilise the latter under the banner of the Communist Party and the anti-imperialist agrarian revolution in India.

The Communist Party of India calls upon all the toilers to form a united front against the imperialists, the landlords, the money-lenders and the capitalists. The C.P. of India calls upon the Moslem and Indian workers and peasants not to be tricked by the cunning provocative methods of the British Government and the revolutionary native exploiters who set the toilers of different nationalities and religious beliefs against one another, and provoke conflicts among them. The C.P. of India calls upon all the toilers, including the untouchables (pariahs) not to permit such disorganisation and splitting of the united revolutionary front of the oppressed who suffer equally at the hands of their own and British exploiters.

In its struggle to win leadership of the masses, the C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to make resolute use of any legal and semi-legal opportunity for public action and mobilisation of the masses around working-class slogans. On every occasion they must expose the treacherous part played by the National Congress. Against the bourgeois front of compromise established by the national reformists, they must create the united front of the toilers from below, on the basis of definite proletarian revolutionary demands and activities.

As one of the practical means of explaining to the toiling masses the exploiting and treacherous policy of the Congress leaders, the

C.P. of India recommends to its supporters to make use of their activity in the trade unions, municipal councils (Calcutta, Bombay etc.) and similar institutions.

The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters and organisations to develop mass revolutionary activities and struggle of the working-class for their political and economic demands, mass refusal by the peasants to pay taxes, levies, rent debts, particularly in districts where there are large landed estates thereby mobilising and preparing the mass of the toilers for revolutionary struggle against imperialism. The C.P. of India calls upon all class-conscious workers and revolutionaries to assist in transforming individual strikes of the workers into a general political strike, as a resolute step in organising the revolutionary struggle of the mass of the people for independence, land and a workers' and peasants' government under the guidance of the working-class.

### **A. General Demands**

In order to develop mass revolutionary struggle and the political training of the people, the C.P. of India puts forward and fights for the following demands:

1. Expulsion of the British troops. Abolition of the police and general arming of the toilers.
2. Immediate liberation of all political prisoners, including those who have committed acts of individual and mass violence.
3. Unlimited freedom of speech, conscience, press, meetings, strikes and associations for the toilers, and abolition of all anti-popular and anti-labour laws (Trades Disputes Act, the prohibition of picketing, the regulations for the deportation of revolutionary workers, press acts, etc., etc.).
4. The abolition of rank, caste, national and communal privileges, and the full equality of all citizens irrespective of sex, religion and race.
5. Complete separation of religion from the State and expulsion of the missionaries as direct agents of the imperialists, with confiscation of their property.
6. The election of Judges and officials, and their recall at any time on the demand of the majority of the electors.



## **B. Special Workers' Demands**

In order to organise the widest masses lot the working-class, defend the day-to-day interests of the workers and maintain the general revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses in our country, the C.P. of India calls upon all class conscious workers to concentrate every effort on the creation of a revolutionary Trade Union Movement. The C.P. of India deems it essential to organise mass Trade Unions based on factory committees with the leadership elected directly by the workers and consisting of advanced revolutionary workers. The Trade Unions must become regularly functioning mass organisations, working in the spirit of the class struggle, and all efforts must be made to expel and isolate reformists of all shades, from the open agents of British capitalism such as Joshi, Chamanlal, Giri etc. to sham "Left" national reformists such as Bose, Ruikar, Ginwala and other agents of the Indian bourgeoisie, who constitute a reactionary bloc for joint struggle against their revolutionary wing of the Trade Union Movement. At the same time the C.P. of India works for the transformation of the All-India Trade Union Congress into a fighting all-India centre of the labour movement on a class basis.

I. The C.P. of India calls upon all its supporters and all class-conscious workers to help in organising factory committees in all factories, railways, docks, etc. throughout the country. In case where owing to the victimisation of the employers or British authorities the factory committees have to work semi-legally, the C.P. advocates putting forward the demand for recognition of the factory committees as one of the principal demands in strike movements. The C.P. of India calls for the country-wide organisation of workers, defence detachments, both to defend workers' strikes and demonstrations and to take part in the general revolutionary struggle.

II. The C.P. of India calls upon all class-conscious workers to help the party to organise the movement and the struggle of the unemployed for regular relief at the expense of the State and the employers. It calls for the country-wide organisation of unemployed councils, demonstrations, and joint struggle with the workers in industry for the partial demands of the unemployed—

monthly unemployment benefit at the minimum cost of living, refusal to pay rent, free supply of fuel and food-stuffs by the municipal authorities etc.

III. Taking note of the semi-slave conditions of plantation and agricultural workers the C.P. of India calls upon class-conscious workers to take part and assist in the organisation of Trade Unions of plantation and agricultural workers. The fight for complete abolition of all systems of serfdom, compulsory and contract labour, deprivation of rights and unprecedented exploitation of the agricultural proletariat is one of our main aims, linked up closely with the aim of mobilising the broad masses of peasantry to fight imperialist and feudal exploitation under the leadership of the working-class.

IV. With the object of protecting the working-class from physical and moral degeneration, and also in order to raise its capacity to fight for emancipation the C.P. of India fights for:

1. Limitation of the working day to 8 hours for adults and 6 hours for youths from 16 to 20. Introduction of the 6 hours working day in all harmful industries, including coal mining and free supply of milk and butter to the workers in these industries.
2. Complete freedom of Trade Unions, demonstrations, picketing and strike.
3. Equal pay for equal work for women, youth and men.
4. Complete abolition of compulsory contract labour and systems of legal bondage of the workers.
5. A compulsory weekly rest period at full pay and a paid annual holiday of 4 weeks for adults and 6 weeks for youths.
6. State insurance against unemployment, sickness, accidents, industrial diseases, old age, loss of working capacity, orphanage and compensation for disablement.
7. Establishment of a State minimum wage of 50 rupees a month, prohibition of the contract system and establishment by law of weekly payment of wages.
8. Prohibition of deductions from wages for any reason or purpose whatever (fines, bad work etc.).

9. Introduction of properly organised factory inspection, workers elected members, thereof to supervise labour conditions in all factories employing hired labour.
10. The abolition of the system of hiring workers through jobbers, sarangs, etc., employment and dismissal of workers to take place through labour exchanges, controlled and supervised by the Trade Unions. The abolition of all caste and feudal customs and regulations within the factories.

In addition, the C.P. of India supports and fights for each and every demand intended to improve the conditions of the workers (building of new houses at Government or employers' expenses, provision of proper lavatories, clean dining rooms etc.).

The C.P. of India is definitely against the principle of arbitration and interference by capitalist arbitration courts. It emphasises most definitely that the sole means for winning any serious concessions on the part of the exploited is resolute class struggle by strikes and mass revolutionary activities.

### **C. Peasants' Demands**

I. The C.P. of India fights for the confiscation without compensation of all land and estates, forests and pastures of the native princes, landlords, money-lenders, and the British Government and the transference to peasant committees for use by the toiling masses of the peasantry. The C.P. of India fights for the complete wiping out of the medieval system of landholding, to cleanse the whole of the land from the rubbish of the middle ages.

II. The C.P. of India fights for the immediate confiscation of all plantations and their transference to revolutionary committees elected by the plantation workers. The allotments to which the planters assign their contract workers and also the land not in cultivation, to be handed over to the labourers and poor peasants as their property. At the same time the C.P. of India is in favour of the nationalisation of all large scale mechanically equipped plantations and workshops connected therewith, for utilisation in the interests of the whole Indian people.

III. The C.P. of India fights for the immediate nationalisation of the whole system of irrigation, complete cancellation of all indebtedness and taxes and revolutionary peasant committees elected by the working peasantry.

IV. In order to disorganise British rule and maintain revolutionary pressure against it the C.P. of India calls upon the peasantry and agricultural proletariat to engage in all kinds of political demonstrations and collective refusal to pay taxes and dues and (also refuse) to carry out the orders and decisions of the government and its agents.

V. The C.P. of India calls for refusal to pay rent, irrigation charges or other exactions, and refusal to carry out any labour services whatsoever (beggar) for the landlords, native princes and their agents.

VI. The C.P. of India calls for refusal to pay debts, and arrears to government, the landlords and the money-lenders in any form whatsoever.

VII. As a practical watchword for the campaign among the peasantry and as a means for developing more political consciousness in the peasant movement, the C.P. of India calls for the immediate organisation of revolutionary peasant committees in order to carry on a fight to achieve all the revolutionary democratic changes required in the interests of emancipating the peasantry from the yoke of British imperialism and its feudal allies.

VIII. The C.P. of India calls for the independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat, particularly the plantation workers, and its amalgamation with the proletariat of the towns under the banner of the Communist Party, as well as its representation in the peasant committees.

The C.P. of India is firmly convinced that the complete thorough-going and permanent achievement of the above mentioned political and social changes is possible only by the overthrow of British domination and the creation of a Federal Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic.

#### **D. Emancipation of the Pariahs and the Slaves**

As a result of the rule of British imperialism in our country there are still in existence millions of slaves and tens of millions of socially outcast working pariahs, who are deprived of all rights. British rule, the system of landlordism, the reactionary caste system, religious deception and all the slave and serf traditions of the past throttle the Indian people and stand in the way of its emancipation. They have led to the result that in India in the 20th century there are still pariahs who have no right to meet with all their fellow men, drink from common wells, study in common schools, etc. etc.

Instead of putting an end once and for all to this shameful blot on the Indian people Gandhi and the other Congress leaders call for the maintenance of the caste system which is the basis and justification of the existence of the socially outcast pariahs.

Only the ruthless abolition of the caste system in its reformed, Gandhist variety, only the agrarian revolution and the violent overthrow of British rule will lead to the complete social, economic, cultural and legal emancipation of the working pariahs and slaves.

The C.P. of India calls upon all the pariahs to join in the united revolutionary front with all the workers of the country against British rule and landlordism.

The C.P. of India calls on the pariahs not to give way to the tricks of the British reactionary agents who try to split and set one against the other toilers of our country.

The C.P. of India fights for the complete abolition of slavery, the caste system and caste inequality in all its forms (social, cultural etc.). The C.P. of India fights for the complete and absolute equality of the working pariahs and all the toilers of our country.

#### **E. The Struggle for the interests of the town and petty-bourgeoisie**

The C.P. of India calls upon the working small producers in the towns to support the revolutionary struggle against British domination, the landlords, the princes, and the money-lenders.

The capitalist class and the National Congress, in their search for a compromise with imperialism are betraying the interests not

only of the workers and peasants but also of wide sections of the town petty-bourgeoisie (craftsmen, street traders etc.).

Only the complete abolitions of British rule, bringing in its train the liberation of our country, the radical alteration of the whole policy of the Government, and the abolition of landlordism and survivals of serfdom throughout the Indian social order will create the conditions requisite for developing the economic life of the country and radically improve the standard of living of the broad sections of the town petty-bourgeoisie, handicraft workers and town poor.

The C.P. of India fights for the cancellation of all usury which has enslaved the poor people of the towns. The C.P. of India fights for the cancellation of all direct and indirect taxes, excise, and other forms of taxation of wages and small earnings, which are ruining artisans, street traders, employees etc. It stands for the replacement of such taxes by a progressive income tax on the capitalists, landholders, banks, and inheritance. The C.P. of India fights for all revolutionary measures which serve the interests of the proletariat and are intended to improve the conditions of the town poor.

### **F. Emancipation of the Toiling Women**

The toiling women of India are in a semi-servile condition under a double burden of the survival of feudalism, economic, cultural and legal inequality. The toiling women have no right whatsoever to determine their fate, and in many districts are forced to drag out their existence in purdah, under the veil and without the right not only of participating in public affairs, but even of freely and openly meeting their fellow citizens and moving through the streets.

At the same time the exploitation and working conditions of the women workers are surely unheard of in their brutality and sweated character. The semi-slave conditions of women in India are the result of the widespread survival of relics of feudalism throughout the social order of the country and its careful preservation by British imperialism.

Noting that the present bourgeois national women's organisation, the All-India Women's Conference, led by Sarojini

Naidu, one of the leaders of the National Congress, is not carrying on a genuine struggle to emancipate women but in reality is co-operating with British imperialism, the C.P. of India calls upon the working women of India to join the common revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses under the leadership of the Communist Party for the overthrow of the social order and social system which give rise to the slave conditions of Indian women.

The C.P. of India fights for the complete social, economic, and legal equality of women. It fights for the complete abolition of night work for the women and the prohibition of underground work for women (in the coal mines) and in all branches where work is harmful for females.

The C.P. of India fights for leave of absence from work at full rates of wages two months before and two months after childbirth, with free medical aid, and for the establishment of creches in all factories and workshops employing women, at the expense of the employers, such creches to cover small children and infants-at-the-breast with special apartments for feeding. Nursing mothers to have their working day reduced to 6 hours.

### **G. Soldiers' Demands**

I. In the struggle for the emancipation of our country, the C.P. of India calls for the spreading of revolutionary propaganda among the soldiers and police and the explanation of the necessity for their armed insurrection together with the toiling masses of the country against British rule.

II. The Indian soldiers and police are socially in the main poor peasants, who have been forced to seek employment in the army by poverty, landlessness and hunger. The C.P. of India fights for the allotment of land to the soldiers equal with all the other toiling peasants. The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to explain to the soldiers and ex-soldiers that the only means of acquiring land, abolishing indebtedness and getting work is the revolutionary overthrow of British and feudal supremacy.

III. The C.P. of India calls upon its organisations and class-conscious workers and revolutionaries to begin organising revolutionary groups among the soldiers. The aim of these groups

must be to persuade and prepare the soldiers to take action in support of a general insurrection of the people for liberty, land and a workers' and peasants' government. It is necessary to explain to the soldiers by concrete examples drawn from their daily lives (arbitrary actions by the officers, shooting down of demonstrations, workers, strikes etc., flagrant inequality of the treatment of white and Indian soldiers—worse food, clothes, allowances, etc.) that Indian soldiers are only a blind tool in the hands of the British robbers, who use them to maintain the national and social oppression of the toiling masses of our country.

IV. The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to organise the ex-soldiers, who have had practical proof of the swindling and exploiting character of British rule, and to build up revolutionary ex-soldiers' organisations among them and wherever possible, fighting detachments to prepare and support the future national insurrection and agrarian movement under the leadership of the Party.

V. The C.P. of India calls upon the class-conscious workers to organise fraternisation with Indian soldiers with the object of establishing closest friendship and explaining the solidarity of the interests of workers, peasants and the soldiers in the fight for freedom and the abolition of all forms of exploitation.

## **H. Youth's Demands**

I. The C.P. of India calls upon the revolutionary working-class youth to build up the Young Communist League. The Young Communist League of India being an illegal organisation owing to the complete lack of rights and the prevailing terror, has as its object to organise the widest possible masses of working-class, peasant and revolutionary student youth around the banner of the Communist Party, doing so either directly or through the medium of auxiliary, legal and semi-legal mass organisations (Youth sections in the Trade Unions, etc.).

II. The Y.C.L. of India as the helper of the Party has the special task of organising the working youth under the banner of Communism. The Y.C.L. of India must come forward as a political organisation which subordinates all forms of struggle, and mass



organisations — economic, cultural, sports etc.— to the interests of the political struggle namely, the overthrow of the imperialist yoke and the winning of power by the working-class and the peasantry.

III. The C.P. of India calls for the country-wide organisation both of mixed and separate workers, peasants and students detachments, both to defend the people's demonstrations, strikes, etc. and in order to make systematic preparations for the armed struggle of the Indian people.

IV. The C.P. of India calls upon the honest revolutionary youth to help in spreading political propaganda among the soldiers and police. The C.P. of India considers that the call of the "Left" nationalists to the soldiers to leave the army and take their discharge, in accordance with Gandhi's philosophy, of non-violence, is a mistake. The task of genuine revolutionaries is to persuade the soldier, while staying in the army, to prepare and raise, when the time is ripe, the banner of armed insurrection and (to fight) shoulder to shoulder with the toiling people, to overthrow British rule.

V. With the object of protecting the toiling youth against physical and cultural degeneration, and in order to develop its revolutionary offensive for the national and social liberation of the toiling masses, the C.P. of India fights for:

- a) Limitation of the working day to 6 hours for youths from 16 to 20. Prohibition of employment of children under 16.
- b) Universal free and compulsory education up to 16 in the national language of the pupil. Free feeding, clothing and supply of text-books to children at the expense of the State. Introduction of vocational training for youths at the expense of the State and employers.
- c) Paid weekly and annual (6 weeks) holiday for youths.
- d) State maintenance of unemployed youths at rates equivalent to the cost of living.

### **Conclusion**

*The Communist Party of India, putting forward its programme of demands of the Indian revolution, calls upon the toiling masses to rally under the revolutionary banner of the Party and carry on the struggle to the successful conquest of power and the establishment of the democratic dictatorship of the working-class and the peasantry in the form of Soviets.*

The C.P. of India declares that the successful solution of the problems facing the revolution against feudalism and for emancipation will open up the possibility, with the help of the international proletariat and the class offensive of the exploited masses of our country of the revolution developing through a number of stages into a proletarian revolution, thereby creating requisite conditions for the development of our country on socialist lines, avoiding the further stage of domination of the capitalist system.

In this struggle the Indian people are not alone. They have an ally in the revolutionary workers of all countries in the world. The workers of the whole world are fighting for the overthrow of international Imperialism and the abolition of the whole system of capitalist exploitation, which is now going through a very profound crisis. The crisis of the feudal and capitalist systems of exploitation in India is at present being combined with the world crisis, which leads to the great sharpening of all antagonisms, the approach of wars, and the rise of a new wave of revolutionary struggles.

The growing crisis is producing the growth of stubborn resistance and counter offensive on the part of the international proletariat and the colonial peoples. The strength of the international revolution is growing. In one of the countries of the world, Soviet Russia, the working-class has long ago overthrown the power of the exploiters and is successfully building up a Socialist State of society. The Workers of the Soviet Union have created a firm bulwark of the international Communist movement and are showing in practice how the world ought to be reconstructed in the interests of the workers and peasants. The Soviet Union is a reliably ally of the colonial peoples, including the toilers of India.

The toiling masses of India will receive the support of the revolutionary workers of all countries, particularly of the developing Chinese revolution. The toiling masses of India will also be supported by the revolutionary workers of Great Britain, led by the British Communist Party, while the ruling Labour Party of MacDonald and Independent Labour Party of Maxton and Brockway, who are to tighten and maintain the noose of slavery and poverty round the neck of the Indian people. In spite of all the devices of the imperialists and their reformist agents, the revolutionary front of the world proletariat and the colonial peoples is growing stronger and wider everyday.

But to ensure the victory of the Indian revolution, there is required a Communist Party of the proletariat, the leader and organiser of the toiling masses of our country. The building of a centralised, disciplined, united mass underground Communist Party is to-day the chief and basic task, long overdue, of the revolutionary movement for the emancipation of our country.

The C.P. of India declares with pride, that it considers itself a part of the organised world Communist movement, a section of the Communist International. The C.P. of India calls upon all advanced workers and revolutionaries devoted to the cause of the working-class to join the ranks of the Communist Party now being built, in order to fight to carry out the historic tasks of the Indian revolution. In the conditions of British supremacy and terrorism, the Communist Party can exist and develop only as an underground Party, applying and utilising all forms of legal and illegal activities to develop its mass struggle and to win the toiling masses for the fight for the democratic dictatorship of the working-class and the peasantry. The Communist Party of India sets up its Party organisations and groups in all towns and in all factories and workshops throughout the country.

The Communist Party of India organises the working-class and the basic masses of the peasantry under the banner of the Indian revolution. In spite of all the difficulties, sacrifices and partial defeats, in spite of all the attempts of the imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie to separate the revolutionary movement of India from

the international proletariat, the Communist Party will lead the struggle of the toiling masses to the complete overthrow of British rule and of the system of landlordism and serfdom in order thereafter, together with the world proletariat, to march forward in the struggle to set up a socialist system of society in our country and throughout the world.

**LONG LIVE THE INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA !**

**LONG LIVE THE WORKING-CLASS, THE LEADER OF THE TOILING MASSES !**

**LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONARY INSURRECTION FOR INDEPENDENCE, LAND AND BREAD !**

**LONG LIVE THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' SOVIET GOVERNMENT !**

**LONG LIVE THE WORLD REVOLUTION !!**

## The Second Round-Table Conference

**Shapurji Saklatvala**

Three and a half years ago, in the 1928 March number of *The Communist*, I had contributed an article on "The Simon Commission".

In this article, speaking of the Indian Nationalist leaders who had combined together in the boycott of the Simon Commission, I asked:

But what will be their next step? Can they merely say that because they will not betray their people into the snares of a Simon Commission, or Lansbury's Home(!) Rule recommendation, therefore they will lead their people out of bondage into freedom and out of misery into plenty?

Just a little before putting this question I had written another sentence:

It may equally be that the politicians will win the day and join hands over the stomachs of a starving people, and arrive at another momentary understanding only to fall out over the spoils later. . . . Of course, if our Indian politicians imperialise themselves, their outlook and their interests, as Labour Imperialists have done in Britain, they will also begin to talk glibly about Home Rule, Dominion Status, British Commonwealth, &c., which, to the masses in India and workers in Britain, can bring poor consolation and can produce nothing but misery and degradation. . . .

This (Simon) or any other similar Commission, whether composed of whites or browns or yellows, will never explore the chances of India's independence, but can only invent new forms of deception by which independence-looking political councils may continue to be under the final domination of the imperialists. . . .

If the first choice (Imperialism instead of Bolshevism), Indian leaders must unite with Irwin, Baldwin, MacDonald, Simon, Birkenhead (since dead) and Lansbury, and, after a lot of noisy investigations, arguments and democratic flourishes, settle down to the daily routine of exploiting, drudging, impoverishing and governing their own people till their workers and peasants make a clean sweep of them along with the entire gang of international financiers and imperialist bosses.

The reader can now easily grasp that this is what is exactly happening now when the second session of the Round-Table Conference has commenced its further talks at St. James's Palace. I have not given the above abstracts for a display of any prophetic vision about a passing political incident, but to show how our differences of political opinions and judgment of men and events are fundamental and based on unerring realisation of the characteristics of nationalist bourgeois leaders in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The Indian politics there are not scores but thousands of advanced Indian youths who seem to believe and regret that Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Congress gang are suddenly changing now and have landed themselves into the lap of imperialist diplomacy and have got themselves out of prison cells into St. James's Palace. This is a grave and unfortunate error. This Gandhi, Nehru, Bose and Patel of to-day are the real persons, and they are doing to-day what they were desiring and destined to do. The Gandhi, Nehru and Congress company of the previous two years were only false artful showmen.

The revolutionary atmosphere in India was of the making of world events which arose out of a combination of post-war capitalist struggles, almost desperate at times, and the progressive attractiveness to the masses everywhere of the steady growth of communist economics and sociology in Soviet Russia. The realisation by the colonial masses of their present misery and of the possibilities of liberation by revolution against landlords, industrial bosses and militarist foreign rulers has been phenomenal. In China, India, Indo-China, Indonesia,

Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia and all over the Negro countries of Africa, this mass awakening and spirit of self-assertion has startled not only the foreign conqueror, but the local privileged class of landlords, capitalist employers, commercial middlemen, professional and political place hunters and all exploiters generally.

The revolutionary activities in India never have been of the making of the Congress or of Gandhi personally, but they have been watched by the cunning Congress leaders wherever they have appeared, and then curbed and turned to their own petty advantage in settling their own bargains with their white commercial rivals.

The rebellious defiance to General Dyer's orders not to hold a mass meeting at Jallianwalla Bag (Amritsar), the fight of the Moplas against landlords, of Akali Sikhs against corrupt temple priests, of the villagers against the police terrorists of Chauri-Choura and the strikes in Bengal and Bombay during the first chapter of Gandhi's "revolutionary" leadership were not of his making. These events in fact were breaking his heart as well as lowering his prestige in the eyes of his Imperialist masters. A series of such manifestations of the revolutionary spirit of the masses unnerved him to such an extent as to make him useless to bourgeois friends in conducting their struggle for commercial gains with the white interlopers. C. R. Das and the Swaraj Party drove him into the wilderness. They began to revive their "parliamentary" reformist campaigns for tariff walls, rupee ratios, lower income tax, a minimum quota of Indian capitalists in banking, shipping and other exploiting institutions &c.

The workers and peasants were left in an awful plight, and they had to start all over again to renew their economic struggles against such Congress leaders and supporters as were their employers, landlords or money-lenders. Strikes on railways, in mines, jute mills and cotton mills assumed alarming proportions as well as frequency, and the resistance of workers to wage-cuts and of peasants to economic oppression went beyond the calculations as well as the powers of the master-class and governmental bureaucracy to suppress. The industrial and

capitalist section of the Congress began to look to the professional and political section of the Congress to play the last powerful card of once coming forward to go backward and to dope and to deceive the masses. Secret and open funds from merchants and landlords began to pour into their coffers. The political leaders in India had in front of them the tempting example of the treacherous British Labour leaders who had so successfully let down the 1926 General Strike into which millions of fairly well organised workers so hopefully launched themselves.

The workers and peasants in India had already begun to discount the value of Gandhi or Swaraj leaders, and new inspiring centres were being gradually discovered in the new movements of Youth, Workers and Peasants Party and the Communist Party of India. The popularity of the militant proletarian leaders, irrespective of even any racial prejudice against English comrades like Bradley and Spratt, among the illiterate masses startled the capitalists as well as the politicians of the Congress.

Lord Irwin was watching the situation with no little trepidation. His grim determination to use bullets, bombs and prison cells on a scale worthy of a monstrous tyrant was there, but he realised something far more destructive than these crude weapons was needed to harness and restrict and crib the widespread, revolutionary resolve of the masses both in villages and in towns. He kept in close secret touch with all Swarajist leaders and accommodated them with a few capitalist concessions to establish their merit in patriotic leadership. He paid his mock respect to bogus or novice trade union leaders and gave them places on councils or a free holiday to Geneva. But knowing from personal experience the great value of the church and pulpit for suppressing and robbing the masses, he was tempted to revive Gandhism. He established first indirect and secret, and then direct and open, contact with Gandhi.

The Congress leaders and their capitalist conspirators used the Simon Commission as a great Red Herring. They tried to impress upon the masses that their economic misery, social degradation



and political serfdom were due 100 per cent. to foreign rule and not a fraction of a per cent. to capitalism and landlordism. They hoped completely to divert the mass mind to relegate all power to a political junta and to rely upon them for achieving national independence one fine day without molesting the mill-owners or landowners or Indian princes. The new militant leaders of industrial workers still remained a thorn in their side. Besides the Imperialism Government wanted some false evidence produced in a dramatic style against the U.S.S.R. to have an excuse for a regular war of annihilation on the workers' republic.

Here was common ground for secret plotting between the bourgeois Congress leaders and their "enemy" Viceroy. The arrest and scandalous trial of the Meerut prisoners is the result. The responsibility and guilt of the Nehrus, Patels and Gandhi for this Meerut conspiracy against the growing power of the Indian masses is no less than that of Irwin, MacDonald, Benn or Peel. This indeed was the first Gandhi-Irwin or Viceroy-Congress pact.

The old Congress leaders, in spite of Lord Irwin's continuous exhortation to get a "religious thug" up to the forefront, were doubtful and they saw the need of a modern "Left-wing" faker with the glib tongue of an "International Socialist" to counteract the leadership of genuine communists or revolutionary youth.

They carefully prepared Jawaharlal Nehru as an alternative "Socialist Thug" in case the religious humbug made no appeal during an economic tornado which seemed inevitable. Jawaharlal even induced his father not to accept the invitation for a 2 to 3 weeks' sojourn in Moscow during the 1927 celebrations of the Tenth Anniversary of the Communist Revolution, as he felt that this might compromise them in the eyes of their landlord and merchant following. So to acquire merely a bogus reputation as an international revolutionary he cut down this trip to a stay of two days in Moscow. Even to-day this helps him to be described in the Indian and British Press as a terrible communist who has "lived" and "learned" in Moscow! He grandiloquently appeared and spoke on the platform of the League Against Imperialism

purely to acquire a false value for himself. He never intended to and has never carried out any work on behalf of the League in India.

Gandhi's jibes at the Madras resolution for India's independence and the spectacular "Nehru Constitution" failed to give Lord Irwin his Empire in a new disguise. The young blood and the hot-heads wanted to see the "Indian Lenin" come out and functioning, and they took independence to mean nothing else. On the other hand the masses were also thinking of their "independence," and they were looking at the world from the inside of their stomachs and not from inside a council chamber in Delhi, when they were demanding "rights" and "freedom."

Another bold attempt was made; the Labour Government and Lord Irwin between themselves staged a "Dominion Status" declaration. No sooner had His Excellency's words vanished in thin air than Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other treacherous Congress leaders, who in secret pact with Irwin, had kept themselves ready to act at a moment's notice, came out with the ignominious and despicable Delhi Manifesto of 1929. This childish trick did not work, and it remained in the history of secret diplomacy and arranged sham fights as one more of the many still-born plots. The Lahore Congress had to be, the Independence Resolution must be flourished, a break between Congress leaders and their guide and master, the Viceroy, had to be arranged.

Lord Irwin and the Congress leaders finally saw that the Maharajas and the idle rich could not be saved from the fury of the hungered and wronged crowds except by free use of guns, bayonets, air-bombs and batons, and who but Gandhi could help such organised "constitutional" bloodshed, and at the same time completely protect the perpetrators from retaliation by the masses. The glory of the "Non-Violence" saint was therefore at once proclaimed and North, West, East, South rang with praise of him who had never failed British militarism in the hour of its need. American, German, French and British admirers sprang up.

At Lord Irwin's command, the Congress leaders agreed to bring Gandhi to the forefront. Here was Congress leadership, like

a universal provider. If the masses wanted a little Lenin there was a Jahwar, if they wanted a world-famous anti-Lenin they had the divine Gandhi. Thus hastily a dual leadership was arranged, Jahwarlal Nehru was elected as the Skeleton President, and Gandhi became the Spirit Dictator.

So the struggle for Independence began, but unfortunately under the hypocritical and impossible leadership of the Congress. The revolutionary spirit of the masses became again manifest. Civil disobedience, breach of Salt Act, refusal to pay taxes, refusal to pay any rents, uncontrollable strikes against the cruelly low wages in Indian factories and mines would have all gone apace and the final triumph of the people would have achieved complete and genuine independence. Gandhi and his Congress cut down and limited civil disobedience within manageable compass, they rendered the position of landlords and mill-owners quite safe, and the landlords and mill-owners of course would then keep imperialism safe.

Once again at Sholapur, Chittagong, Bombay, Mymensing, Peshawar, Tharawaddi, events took place which were never of Gandhi's making or Congress plans, but true to their allotted tasks, the Congress leaders soon neutralised the effects and tried to liquidate the revolution. They exhorted the people for a while and only in a few villages, to *suspend* paying the land tax, and as intended from the first, they have since then got busy exhorting the ruined peasants to pay up all the taxes. They threatened to undermine British credit in order to prevent genuine revolutionaries from organising a nation-wide repudiation of all public debts. Now through their mouth-piece, Gandhi, they pledge themselves to pay every farthing of India's public debts with the blood of the people, as Gandhi exactly put it at the Round-Table Conference, and also to stand side by side and fight side by side with British Bankers and capitalists in balancing the British Budget and Credit with the blood of course of the British unemployed and employed workers.

Thus it has come to pass that Gandhi and the Indian Congress have brought to the feet of His Majesty the King, Emperor of Great Britain and Empire abroad, the homage, "the indissoluble

partnership," the credit and blood of the peasants and workers of India after a two years' show and pretence of taking the leadership of a great revolutionary movement for the specific purpose of overthrowing a foreign King's Sovereignty in India and for freeing the world's poorest peasantry and proletariat from inhuman exploitation. Almost ten thousand of the common people have been shot and killed, eighty thousand have been batoned and incarcerated, the brave Gharwalli troops and heroic Trade Union leaders are in gaol, young brave lads have been executed or imprisoned. But do all these matter to Gandhi, Jahwarlal and the Indian Congress leaders in any other way except as a necessary penalty which the common people must pay in order to create new "Empire Builders" and Parliamentary statesmen amongst the political hypocrites?

However, this surrender and betrayal is by no means a personal treachery. It is inherent in the Indian Congress in its very structural being. The Congress has not been for fifty years sold and betrayed by *weak* leaders. The Congress with its opportunities and its origin and fundamental purpose, is attracting to itself political hypocrites and double-faced demagogues as the best medium of their advancement to power and glory.

Speaking at the Round-Table Conference, Gandhi himself said that the Congress was created in an English brain, namely, that of Allan Octavius Hume. Gandhi purposely spoke the half-truth. He knows the whole truth, but does not desire the young, rising present-day Indian generation to know it. Lord Dufferin, the Conqueror of Burmah, was the father and creator of the Indian National Congress. His purpose was deliberately to create and use such an institution for hypnotising and quieting the masses of India through their own leaders in the ever-recurring crises of imperialism. Lord Dufferin sent for Allan Hume, and tutored him how to impose upon the unwary Indian leaders of his day this new instrument of capitalist corruption and imperialist fire-extinguisher. Gandhi proudly told the Indian princes at the Round-Table Conference that the Congress had invariably and uniformly served, loved, helped and honoured all these princes and had never helped the peasants of the Indian States to fight princes,

who are amongst the world's worst oppressors. The Indian princes one and all told the Round-Table Conference, that they have invariably and uniformly assisted British Imperialism in the past and will invariably and uniformly assist their British Overlord in India for all times to come.

The Congress, from its very start also, has assisted a particular type of British man or woman to hold India down. These white men and women pass as India's friends and pretend to be almost Indianised, and then they manage to advise and influence Indian leaders themselves to keep India within the bonds of British Empire "in the interests of humanity". Allan Hume began it, Cotton, Wedderburn and Bradlaugh played the same role. Then at a critical stage after the war, Annie Beasant dexterously betrayed India's Independence. Then comes Rev. Charles Andrews, the holy missionary, whose divine work on this earth has been to keep the Negroes of South Africa and Indians of India a few years longer inside the British Empire than otherwise would have been. There is the insignificant figure of Miss Madeline Slade. Her father, Admiral Slade, was an honestly stupid imperialist, so he helped his country to hold India in bondage openly as an Admiral sitting in a battleship in the East Indian waters. More shrewd and wise, Madeline keeps India in thralldom at a much more critical period of British Imperialism and world capitalism by the simple art of buying cabbages or oranges for Gandhi or by stroking his toes and making the vain-glorious metaphysicist to believe that he is specially born to make peace between India and Britain and to hold the wretched 350 millions of a foreign nationality inside the British Empire.

The real revolutionaries will need to look at the Congress in its true light and to deal with it accordingly. In India it is not merely a problem of bringing a people from political bondage into parliamentary freedom. Here is an exploited and impoverished country looted every day. By oppression and exploitation its total productive capacity is reduced to about £6 per head in all. Education, sanitation, economic regeneration of the masses can scarcely be achieved satisfactorily even with the whole of this £6 per head being spent on the entire nation. Mere economic

conditions demand that there can be no private possession or control in a poor country like India. Her entire resources must be commandeered, possessed and controlled by the nation and spent entirely on nation building and repairing the wrongs of the last 150 years. For colonial and semi-colonial countries communism is not a secondary development, but a primary condition for the freedom and independence of the masses. Therefore, the people's programme, instruments, organisations, must all be communist in their origin, outlook, determination and methods. Viceroy-created Congresses like capitalist-created Parliaments, can only help the powerful and betray the masses. Communist organisation and mass action are the only practical salvation of India's slavery and poverty.

## **The Indian Revolution And Our Task (\*)**

**A Manifesto of the Communist Party of India to the Revolutionary Intellectuals and to the Workers and Peasants:**

***The Calcutta District Committee of C.P.I.***

### **Comrades:**

We are passing through one of the most critical periods in the history of India. The poverty and distress of Indian people have surpassed all limits, the tales of the most wanton cruelty and exploitation ever recorded in history pale into insignificance before the cruel oppression and exploitation which have become the daily fate of the Indian masses. The price of foodstuff and crops have gone ridiculously down which show that the producers, i.e., the peasantry, cannot realise even the cost of production by selling their produce. At meetings and assemblies the city people are very fond of calling the peasantry "the backbone of India", which indeed they are, but they do not for a moment comprehend that the backbone has been bent to the utmost by the double load of foreign and native exploitation and that their only way of saving themselves is by violently overthrowing both the loads. The condition of the working class is no better. Hundreds of thousands have been discharged from services, rationalisation by means of huge cuts of ridiculously low wages, forced leaves etc. have become the order of the day and even now all the industries are belching forth armies of unemployed whose only provision is to die in the street. The pauperised intelligentsia of the towns and cities are in the same condition, employment is as much scarce among them, reduction in their wages and number is being pursued with the same zeal and cruelty by the capitalists and the government, and suicide due to the want of food and shelter has become a common occurrence among them.

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\*Published as a Booklet in 1933

What is responsible for all these? We all know that British Imperialism is mainly responsible for all these, we all know that the Indian people are groaning under the yoke and the exploitation of British Imperialism, we all know that imperialism in its insatiable greed and lust for wealth and due to its inevitable contradictions which it can not control, has brought the condition of almost the whole of the world to this terrible pass. In India British Imperialism has all the power of state in its hands, it controls the main branches of industry such as railways, sea and river transport, banks and the credit system, the greater part of the land, forest and irrigation system, etc. and it has retarded and still obstructs the economic development of our country in every way, supporting and relying upon all that is backward and reactionary in the country. Relying upon their political supremacy, and squeezing billions of rupees year by year out of miserable income of India, the thirsty imperialists have brought the toiling masses of the Indian people to a state of famine, hopeless poverty, inevitable slavery and mass extinction as a people.

In the enslavement of the Indian people British Imperialism relies upon the native princes, the landlords, the moneylenders and the merchants, utilising the assistance of the national bourgeoisie. Long before the appearance of the white traders a prosperous class of Indian merchants had grown in India as in other countries, production had decisively begun for exchange, the forces of bourgeois revolution had been growing. But the normal process of social evolution was retarded by alien capitalism and though the decayed feudal absolutism of the Moghuls was overthrown, the new state for capitalist exploitation, i.e., the British Raj, in order to consolidate its power, created a new class of feudal lords and Zeminders. This new parasite on the body of society which thrives on a share of the colonial plunder of imperialism naturally helps its masters in sucking the life-blood out of the Indian peasants. Many of the merchants are also intermediaries between Indian raw-materials and British finished products so that their interests are also closely allied with that of British Imperialism. Besides, there is no sharp line of demarcation between Indian



capitalists and Indian zeminders for, in many cases, the former invested heavily in land and the latter in industry.

But the horrible condition of the peasants and workers of India makes it imperative to win the independence of the country and to raise the banner of agrarian revolt which would smash the system of parasitic landlordism. An agrarian revolution, against British capitalism and landlordism must be the basis for the revolutionary emancipation of India. Now, what policy will lead the national revolution to victory, who will rally together the masses and who will be the leader of the struggle for national liberation? Our answer is:—The policy of communism alone shall be the policy of the revolutionary struggle, the Indian working class shall be its only leader and, growing out of the struggle of the workers, the Communist Party of India, the leader of the Indian working class, shall lead the revolution to victory. Let us examine this in greater detail and in the light of the state of national struggle in India.

### **The National Congress can not be the Leaders of the Indian Revolution**

As we said in our manifesto of December 23rd, 1931, the state of national struggle is nothing less than a tragedy. The peasantry is rising up in open revolt in many places, the workers are coming out in spontaneous strikes, the petty bourgeoisie are manifesting their great unrest and dissatisfaction by repeated terrorist actions, in fact, we presented with the best opportunity of launching a decisive struggle for independence-yet there is no co-ordination among the isolated struggles, there is no clear cut policy, there is the greatest confusion regarding our goal and our method. This is due to counter-revolutionary activities of the Indian bourgeoisie and their organisation, the Indian National Congress. The Congress has openly declared itself against the peasantry and in favour of the blood sucking Zeminders and landlords. For example, Gandhi speaking about the aim of the Congress said "Let me warn you against listening to the advice if it has reached you that you have no need to pay Zeminders any rent at all..... We (Congressmen) do not speak to injure the Zeminders" (Vide Statesman, May 24, 1931). This is only one example among many and the Congress

has at every time, in action and in declaration, sided with the parasitic Zeminders against the oppressed peasants. In fact, after the ignominious Delhi pact it openly helped the government to collect the land taxes from the poor and starving peasants.

Against imperialism also it has shown the most cowardly compromising and vacillating attitude. Moved by the rising discontent and open revolt of the masses (the uprising at Peshawar, Sholapur, Midnapore etc.) it had to carry on the policy of Civil Disobedience in 1930, but it was itself afraid of the violent objective revolutionary force of the masses which grew out of the timid, passive Civil Disobedience movement. So as soon as British Imperialism beckoned to it the Congress leaders flocked like tame dogs to that oppressive representative of the British Government—Lord Irwin—and signed a pact with him in 1931, without waiting for the verdict of the people. We ask you friends, did we gain anything by the pact? The extra ordinances relating to Civil Disobedience only were withdrawn and we were asked to rejoice in this as a great victory. But any fool could understand that the ordinances were there due to the Civil Disobedience movement and if the Civil Disobedience was withdrawn by the Congress, there was no necessity for British Government to retain the repressive measure—they automatically ceased. The Meerut prisoners and the terrorist revolutionaries were allowed to rot in jail, the brave Garhwali regiment were allowed to be shot and disbanded, the peasantry and the working class were allowed to sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of misery and ruin, the poor intelligentsia were allowed to die of starvation—while the leaders of the bourgeois National Congress went on bended knees like meek sheep to the Round Table show at London.

The R.T.C. did not bear any fruit as we foretold in our last year's manifesto—and the government itself forced the Congress to adopt Civil Disobedience without waiting for the Congress to decide for it. The ruthless and brutal persecution of the government was in full swing and in spite of this the Congress advocated non-violence! The Congress was determined to pursue its policy of counter revolution.

**Non-violence is poison for the masses but  
Terrorism can not succeed**

The Congress stands for non-violence. This they have to for, otherwise, mass violence will sweep away British Imperialism and along with it the interrelated classes of Zeminders and merchants whose interests are the interests of Congress. So whenever the Congress movement, subjectively non-violent, have objectively forced the masses into open violent rebellion against British Imperialism and landlordism the Congress, fearing that the masses might succeed and gain independence, have openly repudiated the action of the masses and called off the movement in order to save imperialism and landlordism. When the peasants of Chauri-Chaura rose up in revolt against the British Govt., the Congress was alarmed and Gandhi passed his notorious resolution at Bardouli, repudiating the masses and calling off the movement for he feared that once the revolutionary force in the masses were roused, it will spread like contagion and win complete independence for the worker and peasants.

Yes, violence is necessary and armed revolution is the only way for India's national emancipation. But here we are constrained to admit that the path followed by our terrorist friends cannot succeed. The terrorist movement has no connection with the broad masses of the people, the workers and the peasants, and as such it is foolish to suppose that a few isolated attempts will destroy British Imperialism. No, such a movement is too weak. In Ireland the I.R.A. which made some use of terrorist tactics was not primarily a terrorist body — it was the organised vanguard of an armed nation in revolt and its methods of struggle were not much terrorism as guerilla warfare. It had a popular agrarian programme which ensured the support of most of the rural people. Even so, it was only partially successful. In other countries terrorism has always failed and in India also, inspite of great sufferings and sacrifices for many years the terrorists have failed to achieve anything.

Dear terrorist friends! We are not crying you down like the Congress leaders who, terrified by the Ordinances and government repression, openly denounce you and all violent means. We know and preach that violence is necessary and we appreciate the

*immense sacrifices which you have made. We fully understand that dissatisfied with the prevailing economic condition and disappointed by the timid and counter-revolutionary Congress programme you, in your zeal for the cause of revolution, have resorted to terrorist tactics. We only appeal to you to get a clear vision about the path and the goal of the Indian Revolution, to preach for the cause of the violent Indian Revolution among the masses of India under the leadership of the Communist Party of India, to rouse the masses into an armed revolt. That alone is the way to success.*

Non-violence cannot succeed — terrorism has never succeeded but our comrades in the U.S.S.R. have shown what communism can do. They have established the authority of the Proletariat, freed the country from the Czar's despotism, broken down the open and secret resistances of British, French, German, American and Japanese imperialism, freed the Czar's colonies, educated the illiterate masses and set up a new socialist order in which the exploitation of man by man has totally ceased. When the whole world is plunged into deep distress and economic disorder due to the crisis brought in by imperialism, our comrades in the U.S.S.R. are building up gigantic industries, have given work and bread to every man and woman in the state and are marching triumphantly towards their goal — the socialist society. So, while other methods have failed, Communism has succeeded. Then, as the other methods have been tried in India and that without success, communism must also be given its chance and it will surely bring in victory.

Communism is not, as some interested persons would have you believe, a thing imported from Russia. It is a theory growing out of the condition of the oppressed and exploited in all lands and as regards these things India has only too much of them. Communism for India is a thing adapted to the requirements of the Indian people and the process of evolution of Indian Society, but basically both these things are of the same character in all lands.

The Communists do not profess to bring in a Socialist Society in India at once. The opportunists and self seekers might have told you that the communists want immediately to establish the

*Dictatorship of the Proletariat in India.* No, this is a downright falsehood. While maintaining that socialism is the ultimate goal of the Indian Society and while recognising that the Dictatorship of the Indian Proletariat is a stepping stone to that stage, the Communist Party of India puts forth clearly that the coming Indian revolution shall be a bourgeois democratic revolution, that the immediate aim of the revolution is to establish the Federal Soviet Republic of the Workers and Peasants of India and not the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Any sincere revolutionary will agree with the Communist party of India in declaring that the following are the fundamental and immediate demands of the Indian national revolution:—

1. The complete independence of India by the violent overthrow of the British rule. The cancellation of all state debts. The confiscation and nationalisation of all British factories, banks, railway, sea and river transport and plantations as well as of all big native concerns.

2. Establishment of a Federal Soviet Republic of the Workers and Peasants of India. Right of national minorities to self determination, including separation. Abolition of the native States.

3. The confiscation without compensation of all the land, forest and other property of landlords, ruling princes, churches, temples, mosques, the British Govt. officials and money-lenders, and handing over for use to the toiling peasantry. Cancellation of slave agreements and all the indebtedness of the peasantry to money-lenders and banks.

4. The eight hour working day and all the radical improvements in the condition of labour. Increase in wages and state maintenance for the unemployed.

### **The Working class Shall Lead the Indian Revolution**

The bourgeois National Congress is not fighting for the masses, not even its so called "Left" Section. The representatives of the left, Jawaharlal, Bose are even worse than the right and its representative Gandhi, for the latter is, at least, frank in his

confession that he is against the peasants and the workers. The former sound empty phrases and try to confuse the issues. Jawaharlal, who after 3 or 4 days' sojourn at Moscow suddenly turned a socialist and who emphatically declared at the Calcutta Congress that "the spirit oozes out of me when I think that I am fighting for Dominion Status" meekly supported Dominion Status at Lahore and Karachi and Bose and others of the so-called left followed suit! Dear comrades did we fill the prisons, suffer terrible repression for Dominion Status! Are our preparations for greater sacrifices and stronger fights only for mere crumbs from the table of the imperialists? No, we are fighting for the realisation of the demands of the workers and peasants of India as embodied in the programme of the Communist Party and as such the Indian National Congress, not even its Left, can be the leader of the Indian revolution. On the other hand it has and will consistently oppose the revolution.

The petty-bourgeoisie can neither be the leader. It is not a homogeneous class, it has diverse sections with diverse interest, some serving the interest of the capitalists, some of the landlords, some of the imperialist police and so on. It is true that some of the petty-bourgeoisie are even now assisting and will assist and take part in crowning the Indian revolution with victory and they will surely share in its gains: but they will not lead it.

The historic task of leading the Indian revolution to victory of establishing the Workers' & Peasants' Soviet republic in India and of establishing the Socialist order of Society through the Dictatorship of the Proletariat devolves upon the working class of India — the most revolutionary class. It is best fitted for the task, for it has no chains of property to bind it down, and it has every thing to gain by the revolution. The Interest of the workers and peasants will be the most advanced by the Indian revolution and as they together constitute 80% of the population, they will carry through the revolution. In this the workers will naturally lead, for they are not bound down to anything, they have experiences of organisation and concerted action by working together and they have shown times without number that they can fight. The strike movement of the Indian proletariat that have and are now taking

place, its independence from bourgeois nationalism, the all India character of the movement, its distribution over almost all branches of industry, the frequency and protracted character of the struggles, the stubbornness with which the workers carry on the strikes, the coming forward of leaders of the strikes from the workers themselves, as well as the political consciousness and independent fight against imperialism which the workers have been showing at Sholapur, at Bombay, in demonstrating against Gandhi's dancing attendance at the R.T.C., in Calcutta demonstrating against the Simon Commission etc. all these facts show that the Indian working class is not only able but it has already begun to take the lead in carrying through the Indian revolution. Yes, they will do it with the help of the peasantry, the urban poor, the revolutionarily inclined intelligentsia.

### **And its Vanguard is the Communist Party of India**

The Communist Party of India is the vanguard of the Indian working class. It has grown and will grow stronger out of the struggles of the workers of India, it is a part of the Indian working class, it gives expression to the need which the working class feels in the course of its struggles for a leading fighting party. As it has declared in its Draft Platform of Action, "Firmly and courageously and notwithstanding any sacrifices. The C.P. of India will defeat the disorganising and treacherous work of the national reformists. It will organise the masses of workers and peasants and lead them to victory over imperialism, and take the lead in the further march towards socialism". It prides itself in the fact that it is a section of the Communist International, that is marching shoulder to shoulder with the proletariat of all lands for the world revolution for the emancipation of mankind.

### **The Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic**

Experiences of Russia and China have shown that the Soviet form of the state is the natural form of state for the masses. All parliamentary states, though they profess to be democratic, are in reality democracy for the few, for the big capitalists, for finance capital. The great majority of the people, the workers and the

peasants, are repressed and persecuted by them, the fundamental right of better living is denied to the majority by these states, while they pass laws and adopt every measure to secure the ease, comfort, luxury and wealth of a few. But the Soviet form of state is genuinely democratic though it curbs down the power of the bourgeoisie, being a Dictatorship of the workers and the peasants, it gives effect to the will of masses the overwhelming majority. Though it strikes at and nationalises big capital, it gives land to the peasant and allows small concerns and distributive trades to go on. Only later, when the working class is strong enough to take on itself the complete control of the economic life of the country in detail, will all industries and services be nationalised. Its policy will be to build up industry as quickly as possible, so that the essential prerequisites of a proletarian revolution are developed and then Socialism will become possible through the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

### **And how to fight for it?**

The gigantic class struggle which will lead the Indian working-class to the seizure of power is still in its earlier stages. For this the widest possible mass of the people must be rallied upon their respective partial demands such as:

(1) 8-hour day for adults and 4-hour for youths (2) Higher Wages (3) No direct or indirect taxation (4) Annulment of debts of the peasants, workers, artisans and poor petty-bourgeoisie (5) Old age, unemployment etc. insurance at state cost (6) Minimum wage of Rs. 50/= p.m. (7) Abolition of caste, colour and sex distinction (8) Unlimited freedom of press, speech and assembly (9) Allotment of land to the soldiers and policemen (10) Universal free and compulsory education in the national language of the pupils, free boarding, clothing and supply of books to children at state cost (11) Release of all political prisoners etc. etc. (See Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India for fuller details).

The fight for these demands will convince the masses that even the slightest demands can not be fulfilled without overthrowing imperialism and it will lead the masses into open revolt



and struggle against imperialism. They will be led to insurrection and violent challenge against the established authority. But before the seizure of power new organs of power must be created among the workers and peasants revolutionary committees or Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers' deputies must be formed all over the country and these committees will fight the offensive of the present state and after overwhelming it with the help of mass insurrection will take over the function of the state in their own hands.

To ensure the victory of the insurrection the sympathy and support of the soldiers and the police must be enlisted. The Indian soldiers and the police are in the main poor peasants, who have been forced to seek employment in the army and the police by poverty, landlessness and hunger. The Communist Party of India fights for the allotment of land to the soldiers and the police equally with all other toiling peasants. It must be explained to the soldiers, the ex-soldiers and the policemen that the only means of acquiring land, abolishing indebtedness and getting work is the revolutionary overthrow of British and feudal supremacy. That they are blind tools in the hands of the British robbers must be explained to them by concrete examples from their daily lives (arbitrary actions by officers, shooting down of demonstrations, strikes etc., flagrant inequality of treatment of white and Indian soldiers and police — worse food, clothes and allowances etc.) and revolutionary groups among them must be organised, which will be the embryonic form of the Soldiers' and the Policemen's Soviet.

The soldiers and police won over to the side of revolution and local revolutionary Societies of the workers, peasants, soldiers and policemen set up, these will fight for the establishment of the Workers' & Peasants' Soviet Republic and the All India Congress of Soviets will take up the state power in its own hands after defeating and overthrowing imperialism through mass insurrection.

These are the main features of the immediate tasks and forms of struggle of the Indian revolution and for putting them into practice the Communist Party of India must be strengthened.

**Against Roy Opportunism and Treachery**

In this connection it is necessary to expose the treachery and opportunism of groups masquerading under the name of the Communist Party of India whose real motive are to serve the interest of Indian capitalism by disrupting the working class movements and organisations. The latest move in this direction is being made by M.N. Roy and his group. Roy, who was driven out of the C.I. on account of his counter revolutionary activities in China and his openly siding with the Communist Opposition of the imbecile and treacherous Brandler group, has an equally treacherous and counter-revolutionary group in India which has recently adopted the name of the C.P. of India. We appreciate the sacrifices which Roy had formerly made in the cause of the Indian revolution and we join with all in demanding his release as well as that of all political prisoners from the imperialist jail. But, nevertheless, the policy adopted and followed by his groups is directly against the interest of the Indian working class and meant to sabotage the Indian working class movement which is part of the movement of the International proletariat. As the name of Roy and his former association with the Communist International, the organisation of the international proletariat, may delude some, especially the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, it is necessary to show the real counter-revolutionary colour of the theory and practice of the Roy group.

But it is not easy to do so because Roy has not advanced any consistent policy regarding the Indian national revolution from after his expulsion from the C.I. In 1930 he talked of capturing the Dist. Congress Committees and his latest work (*Our Task in India* by M.N. Roy) speaks about setting up "local committees of deputies elected by the workers and peasants, artisans and employees, poor intellectuals and small traders' organisations". This shows that Roy's theory and Roy's group are following the tail of the working-class movement and they are putting up a little sham-radical appearance whenever the masses are going ahead. However, let us discuss about his theory from his latest publication. He says that "the signal for insurrection will be the slogan for the election

of the National Constituent Assembly” which, he admits, “includes a large bourgeois element”. But still he tries to fool the masses by saying that “the Constituent Assembly is not a bourgeois parliament”, it is a “Democratic Dictatorship under the hegemony of the proletariat”. Apart from his own admission we all know from the history of Paris of May 4, 1848 and of the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917–18 that the Constituent Assembly is the crown of parliamentary institutions, that is here that the bourgeoisie reveal in persecuting the oppressed and the exploited. Roy, who makes so much of being a thorough-bred Marxist, (read turncoat) has discreetly forgotten and overlooked, like Kautsky, that Marx was emphatic in repudiating the Constituent Assembly of May 4, 1848, saying, “The National Constituent Assembly, elected by universal suffrage ... was an embodied protest against the aspirations of the February days, and its aim was to guide the revolution back into bourgeois channels” (18th Brumaire). When the workers and peasants of India have violently overthrown British Imperialism and called for the session of the Constituent Assembly cherished by Roy, the bourgeoisie will also join the Constituent Assembly, as they did in Russia, and their favourite agents like Roy and his followers will be given comfortable posts in the Cabinet, as they gave to Tsereteli, Tchernoff and Co. in Russia. Further, as we said in the beginning of this para. Mr. Roy is changing colours to often. In the “Masses of India” of July 1927 he attacked Comrade Dange because the latter had called himself an Indian Communist and wrote, “Communist movement in a country must be a national section of the international communist movement” and now in his “Our Task in India” he does not say that the Indian working class will fight hand in hand with the international proletariat for world revolution and now he is showing the greatest zeal in abusing the Communist International, the only revolutionary organisation of the international proletariat! But let the dogs bark.

It is clear that the Constituent Assembly is a reactionary slogan meant to dupe the masses and this is made more manifest by the adoption of the name of the Communist Party of India by the counter-revolutionary Roy Group. The counter-revolutionary role

of the Roy group is clearly exposed by their behaviour and attitude at the Calcutta session of the Trade Union Congress. They sided with the treacherous national reformists of Bose & Co. (whom even Mr. Roy had formerly been emphatic in denouncing!) and caused a split among the workers. At Bombay their activities are meant solely to disrupt the working class movement and cause split among the militant trade unions by misleading them into reformist lines.

The real immediate slogan of the Communist Party of India is the "Workers' & Peasants' Soviet Republic" and the steps to that goal have been treated above in detail. It is a dangerous and laborious process, but there is no alternative. In order to achieve our purpose it is urgently necessary to build up a strong, underground. All Indian Communist Party and it is our earnest appeal to all real revolutionaries to form secret groups and nuclei, to join the ranks of the Communist Party, to develop the revolutionary working class movement and to fight for the ultimate attainment of Socialism.

### **To all Communists and Class-conscious Workers**

Dear Comrades! The communist movement in India has now reached such a stage of development that it is absolutely necessary to raise resolutely and firmly the standard of struggle for an All Indian Communist Party, for uniting and welding together all the individual communists and isolated groups, for the organisation and ideological unity of the communist ranks, utilising and developing at the same time the initiative from below to form and develop new local groups and organisations. We have read with pleasure the Open Letter addressed to the Indian Communists by the Central Committees of the C.Ps. of China, Great Britain and Germany and we admit that excepting a few misinformation and exaggerations the points advanced in that letter and the criticisms made therein are true. Yes, "it is necessary to come out decisively for an All Indian C.P." and "to somewhat move the centre of gravity of Party work to the All Indian activity and begin to build the Party, carrying on the struggle for a common political line, creating

a net of local Party organisations, developing the sense of responsibility, Party feeling and discipline, encouraging local initiative and courageously drawing into our ranks workers and those revolutionary intellectuals who are true to the working class cause". Fighting against all opportunism inside and outside our ranks, it is up to you, comrades to carry on the above tasks and fulfil the Indian revolution. We have committed many mistakes in the past, even now there are motives of provincialism and self-isolation in the ranks of the C.P.I., but let us not be downcast by them — let us put the interest of the proletariat above everything else and direct all our efforts towards the rapid formation of the COMMUNIST PARTY.

**On to the formation of a strong All India Party!  
Victory to the Indian revolution!**

*January 1933.*

### **Meerut and After**

This pamphlet was originally intended to be published in December, 1932, but due to various reasons and difficulties it could not come out of the press till March, 1933. In the meantime the imperialist have convicted the comrades in the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case. Even the despotism of the Russian Tsars and the oppression of the slave-owners of yore pale into insignificance before the wanton cruelty with which the blood-thirsty imperialists have persecuted the Communists in the Meerut Case. Even the most light hearted shudder at the monstrous sentences passed on them.

But if the imperialist persecution is without parallel, it at the same time reveals the inherent weakness of imperialism, it brings out clearly how much the imperialists fear the Indian working class offensive against imperialism, which was only started by the Meerut comrades. It has objectively, roused the fury of the Indian masses against imperialism and this is revealed by the huge protests and fights of the workers at Calcutta, Bombay, Nagpur etc. in defence of their leaders. The recent arrest and trial of the working

class leaders at Calcutta, Nagpur and Bombay in connection with the observance of the Meerut Day shows vividly the utter bankruptcy of imperialism and the stubborn will of the Indian working class to fight for their demands on the policy and tactics of communism.

Comrades! let us not lose this opportunity. The objective conditions are distinctly in favour of the rapid growth and crystallisation of a very strong, underground and All Indian Communist Party and we repeat to you the appeal in our Meerut Day leaflet to overcome your petty quarrels and to hurl yourselves with zeal, courage and determination into the immediate task of "CLOSING THE COMMUNIST RANKS". The C.C. of the C.P.I. has been split up with quarrels on account of its own faults and weakness. Let us close that sad chapter in the history of the C.P.I. and re-form with new vigour and earnestness a strong and really representative Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, let us bring out a Central Organ of the C.P.I., let us infuse fresh blood into the party and — with a really organised Party — let us immediately take the lead in the anti-imperialist fight of the Indian working class.

**Close the Communist Ranks  
Release the Meerut Prisoners  
Create a Central Party Organ  
Lead The Struggle Against Imperialism**

*March, 1933*

*Calcutta Committee of the  
Communist Party of India*

## **An Open Letter to The Indian Communists from The Central Committee of The Communist Party of China. (\*)**

DEAR COMRADES,

We send the warmest greetings to the Indian Communists our class brothers, our heroic comrades in the struggle of oppressed mankind for freedom.

More than a year has passed since we jointly with the British and German Communist Parties sent you the open letter. We have been watching the events in your country with unceasing attention and have been following your self-sacrificing struggle. With the truest and warmest desire to help in your great cause, we are giving you our experiences and our ideas on the most important questions of the present revolutionary movement in India.

There is no doubt that the chief and decisive question is the formation of a militant mass Indian Communist Party. The successful development of the revolutionary mass struggle is possible only under the leadership of a firm Communist vanguard.

The working class of Russia was able to overthrow the hated monarchy, to put a complete end to the frightful oppression of the landlords, to destroy capitalist exploitation, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to repulse the armed attack of the international interventionists, to make a radical improvement of the conditions of the working class and the peasants and to develop the victorious construction of socialism only because of the leadership of an iron, monolithic Communist Party, created and tested in many struggles. Only under the correct leadership of the

\*Letter dated 16.7.1933. Published in INPRECORR, Vol.13, No.51, dated 24.11.1933, Pages 1153-1158.

C.P.S.U. it became possible to convert Russia into an advanced industrial country, to carry on the technical reconstruction of agriculture, to lead the peasant masses out of ignorance and poverty, terrible oppression and ruin, to lead them along the path of prosperity and the progress of agriculture. Under the leadership of the C.P.S.U. a foundation of Socialist economy was built and now classless socialist society where no oppression of man by man exists, is being erected. The U.S.S.R. has ensured its economic and political independence, has become a mighty and invincible fortress of the world revolution, a beacon light that points out the path for the workers and peasants of all countries.

In the U.S.S.R in our Chinese country and in your country and throughout the world, the working class is the only consistently revolutionary class, capable of solving the great tasks which face the revolution. But unless the proletariat is organised, it is nothing. If it is organised and led by the Communist Party it becomes an unconquerable force. Lenin taught us that:

“Without a Party, steeled in the struggle, without a Party which is trusted by all that is honest in the given class, without a Party which is able to watch the sentiments of the masses and influence them, it is impossible to carry on such a struggle.”

The experience of the struggle of the international proletariat confirms the correctness of these words. This experience shows us that without the Communist Party, the working class scatters its forces, cannot take the revolutionary power, cannot obtain the independence of its country, so as to carry further the struggle for socialism. Without it, it becomes merely a plaything, an appendage of its class enemies.

One of the chief causes of the defeat of the Paris Commune was the absence of a Party of the revolutionary proletariat. The experience of the revolutionary storms in Germany, Austria and Italy in 1918-20 shows that without a strong Communist Party, the proletariat was unable to defeat the bourgeoisie and suffered itself a defeat. In China, the successes and weaknesses of our movement directly depend upon the strength and weaknesses of our Communist Party. Only the consistent ideological and organisational growth of the Communist Party, the rise of its



fighting powers a correct understanding and the great loyalty of the Chinese Communists to the interests of the people, explains the successes of the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese-Soviet movement and the workers' and peasants' Red Army of our country.

In India in 1928-30 you were faced with a tremendous wave of strikes, coupled with a big movement of the peasant masses. If in these conditions in India there had been a mass fighting Communist Party, connected with the factories and the villages, able to lead the mass organisations, above all the trade unions, if this tremendous upsurge of the national independence movement which spread over your country had received revolutionary leadership of the Communist Party, it is clear that the results would have been quite different.

This is why, following the example of the Russian proletarians, we have for many years stubbornly built and strengthened in every way the Communist Party. We remembered that this is the basis and decisive condition of the victory of our people in the struggle for independence and growth. We have suffered tremendous sacrifices on this path. When we look back, our blood boils with hatred at our oppressors and class enemies who destroyed many of the best sons of our toiling people. But it is clear that the sacrifices made by our people did not pass away without leaving a trace, they were not sacrifices in vain. By the self-sacrificing and tireless struggle of our Communists, we have brought about a state of affairs when the Soviets became the banner of the national revolution, when the broad masses of toilers are being more and more organised and rally for the armed struggle against imperialism and Kuomintang counter-revolution. Whatever sacrifices the struggle may demand from us in the future, we will build and strengthen our Party.

We clearly realise that in order to solve the tasks of the revolution, we need a militant Party that fights like a lion, a Party of a new type, a special Party which is not at all like the parties of the Second International, not like the Kuomintang, the National Congress and other national-reformist or national revolutionary parties. We need a Party like the C.P.S.U. The C.P. of Germany

and other best sections of the Comintern are becoming and the Chinese Party is doing its best to become like it.

This Party must be a model of Bolshevik organisation and iron discipline, it stands up against conciliation and adaptation to the oppressors and the bourgeoisie, it is not a peaceful Party, but a militant, bold, revolutionary Party, based on Marxist-Leninist theory—the only revolutionary theory of the international proletariat—always connected with the working class masses and always pointing out the way of struggle. Every Party member must be an active, firm, self-sacrificing, conscientious and disciplined fighter. He must give all his strength, all his knowledge and his life to the cause of the Party. “Sons of the working class, sons of want and struggle, sons of unparalleled sufferings and heroic efforts—this is what a member of such a Party should be first of all,” said Comrade Stalin. The Party must not allow any factions and groupings. It must carry on a consistent struggle against all deviations from the Bolshevik line. The Party must form the transmission belts to connect it with the toiling masses, must form and lead the trade unions, the present committees, the Y.C.L. and other mass organisations. Only such a Party can ensure the victorious outcome of the decisive fights with the imperialists and other exploiting classes.

There is not yet such an all-Indian Party in existence. We are becoming more and more uneasy at the slowness of the process of the formation of the Communist Party of India. It is true that the Communists in India are faced with many difficulties. The considerable isolation of India from the international workers’ movement, when bloody British imperialism tries in every way to prevent contacts between the revolutionary movement in India and the international proletariat—plays its negative role. It is not an easy task to break the toiling masses away from the influence of national reformism and form a mass Communist Party. It is not easy in the conditions of the barbarous monopolist domination of British imperialism and the cunning manoeuvres of the conciliatory and anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie. But in spite of all these difficulties, we must realise that the conditions are favourable and fully mature for the uniting and rallying together of all the

Communist groups, for organising an all-Indian Communist Party. In some of your documents you correctly write that the peasants and the working class of India are sinking deeper and deeper into the sea of poverty and ruin. Likewise the propertyless intelligentsia is doomed to death from starvation, whilst the bourgeois leaders of the National Congress are crawling on their knees before the British oppressors. The general situation in your country is characterised at the present time by the fact that through a pseudo-constitution and other manoeuvres, on the one hand, and with the help of furious terror on the other hand, British imperialism is trying to strengthen its positions of domination and oppression of the people. The Indian bourgeoisie, which stopped the civil disobedience campaign and continues its capitulatory policy, clears the path for the rule of British imperialism. At the same time ever wider sections of the toilers are turning their eyes towards the path of the revolutionary struggle against the imperialists and feudalists, they are seeking revolutionary leadership. In these conditions, the rapid formation of the Communist Party is the central task of the Indian revolution.

This is why we welcome the Calcutta Committee of the Communist Party of India, which energetically took up the call for the formation of an All-Indian Communist Party, which understood the necessity to shift the centre of gravity of Party work to activities on an All-Indian scale and which proposed to put an end to the pitiful chapter in the history of the C.P. of India, the chapter of petty squabbles and splits, and to open a new page by the formation of a powerful united Communist Party of India.

We hope that the Calcutta Committee, just as other local organisations, will show initiative and will energetically take up the task of uniting the scattered Communist groups and thus form the foundation of a mass Party. In India there are many Communists. If they are united and organised in a Bolshevik manner, their strength, influence and role will tremendously increase. Of course, this unification must not be carried on mechanically. It is necessary to get clear about ideology and practice of each of these groups. While carrying out the unification it is, of course, not necessary to take all, but the best of them, take

trusted comrades, who support the programme of action of the Indian Communist Party and are ready to fight to carry it out.

The platform of action of the C.P. of India gave a correct Bolshevik analysis of the nature and driving forces of the Indian Revolution and the leading role of the proletariat.

However, the working class, with the Communist Party at its head, can win and carry out its leadership only while participating in the struggle, when masses will see in practice that the Communists represent the only force capable of leading the revolutionary people to victory. The attention of the masses is concentrated now on the solution of a number of revolutionary democratic tasks. The workers, peasants and petty-bourgeoisie are burning with just hatred against the imperialists. They are coming into constant conflict with the British imperialists and with the reactionary forces of the old semi-feudal cast society, into conflict with the officials, police, government, landlords and money-lenders. And here and in the defence of their own everyday interests—the consciousness of the workers and all the toilers and their desire for organisation and struggle is growing. In the struggle for democratic demands a mass revolutionary movement is growing, the class consciousness of the workers is developing, and the proletariat is becoming an independent class force. The toiling masses while fighting for their interests, see and begin to understand in practice the treacherous policy of the national-reformists and are becoming convinced that in order to obtain independence, land and bread and to win the power of the workers and peasants, it is necessary to throw aside the Gandhi-ite policy of non-resistance and the protection of the interests of the exploiters, and follow the path of revolutionary struggle pointed out by the Communists.

And, therefore, it is clear that the task of Communists is to enter and take charge of all these democratic movements, of all movements of discontent against the existing order, whatever questions cause them to arise, and to go everywhere with Communist agitation, putting forward proposals and slogans at every pretext, constantly explaining and showing in practice that the path of the national-reformists is the path of defeat and slavery.

Only when the workers and peasants and the semi-proletarians of the towns and villages see that in the struggle for their everyday economic demands, in the demonstrations against terror and arrests, in the movement against the payment of rent and taxes in the conflicts with the police and officials, in every mass action whether it comes from the students or small toilers, peasants or workers, in the struggle against the caste system etc. come forward at the head and fight consistently and to the end, only then will the toiling masses, and not only the peasants and workers, become convinced that the Communists are the real leaders of the people who can be trusted and with whom it is possible to march to the end in the struggle for independence, land and power.

Look at our Chinese experience, in the revolution of 1925-27 the working class of our country became an independent class force, the leader of the toiling masses. Our Party became a mass Party and began to play a big role on the political arena of China. This was possible only because of the participation of our Party in the democratic movement and especially in the anti-imperialist struggle for the independence of China. In the revolution of 1925-27 our Party applied the tactic of a united national front. It is true, this united national front could not have been and was not long, because in the conditions of a growing revolution the Chinese bourgeoisie (and Kuomintang) turned to the camp of imperialism, reactionary militarists and landlords and became the worst enemy of the revolution. On the other side the former leadership of our Party was not able to avoid the worst opportunist mistakes while carrying out the tactic of the united front. It did not sufficiently defend the independence of the Communist Party and in the intresets of the bourgeoisie limited and narrowed the struggle of the masses. *And however badly we carried out the tactics of the united revolutionary front with the national bourgeoisie*, whatever gross mistakes we may have made, nevertheless it is thanks to these tactics of the united front that we have obtained our success in the struggle against imperialism and the conversion of our Party into a powerful political factor. Without these tactics the successes of the Northern campaign of 1925 would have been impossible. We could not have organised the proletariat and roused it to the

struggle as rapidly as the revolution demanded, we could not have drawn in the peasant reserves. The rapid growth of the organisation of the workers and peasants, the powerful development of the strike struggle of the proletariat and the rapid growth of the peasant movement in 1927, all these achievements which gave great power to our Party would have been impossible if we had not adopted at the same time *the tactics of the united national front, if we had stood apart from participation in the general national movement, if we had not energetically joined in the anti-imperialist struggle, if we had not attracted the broad masses to it, if we had not struggle for the leading influence in this struggles and if we had not determinedly expose the counter-revolutionary essence of national reformism.*

In India, owing to the conciliatory position of the bourgeoisie, the tactic of the all embracing united national front could not find application even at the early stage of the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution. In India it can only be a question of the policy of the revolutionary bloc of the workers and the basic masses of the petty-bourgeoisie. Of course this means a bloc of the masses and not combination of leaders. In this form it is absolutely necessary to apply the tactic of the united front in the national liberation movement in India. The essence of Bolshevik policy is to preserve and strengthen the independent class character of the Communist Party, to avoid being dissolved in the petty-bourgeois sea, to paralyse the influence of the bourgeoisie on the broad masses, and at the same time create the united front of workers, peasants and urban petty-bourgeoisie, utilise any temporary allies, carrying the struggle for leadership of the national movement for independence, land and freedom.

And as far as we can understand the developing condition in India, we believe they are specially favourable to establish the hegemony of the working class in the anti-imperialist movement *if we apply the tactic of the united front.*

The feudal imperialist constitution, advertised by British imperialism has as its aim; strengthening the rule of the imperialists while adopting it to the new conditions. To attract the princes and landlords to some limited participation in the Government of the

country and to give some insignificant constitutional concession to the Indian bourgeoisie and economic concessions at the expense of foreign competition, that is how British imperialism is trying to rally together *the forces of counter-revolution against the Indian people, and prepare for a new international war and above all intervention against the U.S.S.R.* The experience of all history of the Indian national movement especially from 1919 to 1933 showed that the Indian bourgeoisie came out against the revolution, and the more time passes by the more closely it begins to collaborate with imperialism. Experience has shown that the National Congress, in spite of a number of peculiar features of its organisation, is the class organisation of the bourgeoisie connected with the liberal landlord, it consistently combats the anti-imperialists and agrarian revolution. Experience has shown that the path of non-violence and passive resistance and conciliatory negotiations pursued by the leaders of the National Congress is totally bankrupt, plays into the hands of the British imperialists and only leads to a further enslavement of India. Indian experience, like our Chinese experience, once more confirms the prophetic teaching of Lenin that: *in the epoch of imperialism there is no salvation for the colonial people except the path of the people's revolution under the leadership of the proletariat headed by the Communist Party.*

The National Congress led by Gandhi called off the mass civil disobedience movement and did its best to transfer the struggle against the Constitution into the channels of peaceful reformist activity for improving the caste system, for an agreement with the Musulman priesthood and the landed gentry, etc. This is an open support for British imperialism. It is the policy of adaptation to the imperialist Constitution, a policy concealed by a cloak of high sounding words. The new proposal of Gandhi to begin individual civil disobedience instead of mass action is the latest attempt to deceive the people. This "left" gesture conceals the real plan of the leaders of the National Congress to stop the struggle of the masses at all costs and take part in the coming election for the Legislative Assemblies. It is a repetition of the tactics of 1922-24, Gandhi declares himself that he has not changed, while the leaders

of the National Congress are pursuing the path of the old Swaraj Party and all of them together are doing their best to crush the initiative of the masses. At the same time some of "left" Congress leaders like Bose make the proposal to form a new party. Every party and group can be judge only by its deeds and not by its words. The past of Bose does not inspire us with great confidence. Bose, Nehru and their followers in the past fully supported the policy of Gandhism. We cannot forget that in 1928 Bose signed the anti-National Constitution of Motilal Nehru, the central point of which was the repudiation of the demand for the independence of India. In 1929, having formed together with Nehru the League of Independence, Bose and his friends quietly buried this League in 1930-32 when Gandhi put forward his eleven points, made a pact with Lord Irwin, etc. Bose split the trade union movement trying to isolate the Communist hiding behind false charges against the Communists that they were acting against the independence movement. While in reality the Communists were oppqosing the National Congress participation in the Round-Table Conference and fought against the treacherous policy of the National Congress Leaders. The "left" Congress-ites, including Bose, share full responsibility for the entire policy of betrayal of the interests of the people pursued by the National Congress. At present (July 1933) in his appeal to the "third" political conference of Indians in London, Bose criticised Gandhi stating that he proved to be incapable to make a compromise with British Imperialism. In his appeal, Bose does not oppose the theory of Non-violence and instead of calling on the masses for wide mass activities against the Constitution, instead of calling to start and support the movement for the non-payment of debts, tax and rent, instead of preaching the general strike and calling the preparation for it, i.e., instead of the mass struggle, advised the masses to wait until Bose and his friends had studied the experience of other countries. Thus on the basic question whether to raise the banner of mass resistance against the constitution or to help the leaders of the National Congress to disorganise the mass movement and make it easier for British imperialists to carry through the anti-National Constitution, Gandhi and Bose acted together, although the later



concealed himself behind "left" phrases. Bose is opposed to converting the struggle against the constitution into a movement of millions claiming in his appeal that there is apathy and a fall of spirits among the people. This is plainly not a correct appraisal, and we are sure that you do not agree with it.

There is no apathy among the Indian people. The increasing strikes of the workers, the peasant revolt in Alwar, the numerous actions of the toiling masses, the movement for a general strike and the non-payment movement are signs of the activity of the masses. The revolutionary people are prepared to struggle, but they have lost their faith in the treacherous policy of the National Congress and are seeking new paths a new programme, new leadership.

All honest fighters for the independence of India for land and freedom for the peasants, for the improvement of the lot of the workers must follow the path of the slogans given in the platform of action of the Indian Communist Party. It seems to us that the Indian Communists will not refuse to collaborate and even make temporary agreements with any revolutionary group and organisation which is prepared or capable even for a certain period to carry on the revolutionary mass struggle for independence.

However, at the present period of mass disappointment with the policy of the National Congress, along with the appearance of National revolutionary groups outside or inside the National Congress, we see the appearance such "oppositional" groups as the group of the renegade Roy, who, concealed by "left" phrases and a half criticism of the policy of the National Congress, come out in practice against the development of the mass revolutionary struggle of the workers and the peasants, carry on the old policy of subordinating the working class to the bourgeoisie and maintaining the leading position of the bourgeois National Congress among the masses of the people. The duty of the Indian Communists is to raise the banner of struggle against the Constitution, developed it on the lines of the mass movement, linking it up with the strike movement in defence of the immediate demand of the masses directing it to support the general strike, non-payment of rent, debts and taxes and the liberation of the

political prisoners. The duty of the Indian Communists is to call for a united front of workers, peasants, students and urban poor, and to begin to form it for the struggle against the Constitution, appealing to the rank and file adherents of the Congress to support the struggle of the workers and peasants. And expose at the same time the new attempts of the "left" national-reformists to deceive the toiling masses as was done previously by the League of Independence. It would not be correct for the Indian Communists to abandon the struggle against the Constitution and limit themselves merely to the economic struggles. The comrades who take such a point of view are stepping towards a harmful sectarianism, isolates themselves from the movement for independence and do not understand the necessity to attract all democratic groups capable of marching together with the working class along even part of the path against the imperialists. It is wrong to counterpose the anti-imperialist to the strike struggle, it is necessary to conduct both at the same time. The attractive force of the Communist Party will grow and its significance as a revolutionary factor will increase in proportion to its rising participation in the anti-imperialist struggle and its ability to take the lead in all the actions of the Indian people against British imperialism.

There is no need to repeat much here that the task of strengthening the position of the Communists in the working class is the primary task. Participation in the trade unions and the development of the economic strike struggle of the working class at the present time is a most important part of all the work of the Communists. Only the successful action of Communists in this sphere can serve as a guarantee for strengthening the Communist Party itself and ensuring the hegemony of the proletariat in the general struggle of the people.

The successes of the independence struggle in our country are inseparably connected with the strike movement of the working class. The mass of the historic important revolutionary actions of the Chinese proletariat raised the liberation struggle of our people to a higher level and laid the ground for proletarian hegemony—this decisive prerequisite of the success of the revolutionary

struggle. The new era the new upsurge of the independence struggle of the Chinese people was open by the great strike of seamen in Hong Kong in 1922, and the famous strike on the Peking-Hankow railway in February 1923. The strike of over half a million workers in Shanghai in the summer of 1925 formed the beginning of the great Chinese revolution. The general strike of a year and a half duration in Hong Kong in 1925-26 converted the then Canton into the basis of the Chinese national revolution. The strike and the seizure of the British concession in Hankow in January, 1927, by the Wuchang workers, and the three revolts of the Shanghai proletariats, eventually victorious in 1927, greatly increased the extend of our revolution and raise the leading role of the party in it. Further, the heroic efforts of the Canton workers in December in 1927, when they declare the Canton Commune, open the new Soviet phase of our revolution, and finally consolidated the role of hegemony of the proletariat in the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution.

But we know also another example when the absence of sufficient Communist influence on the working masses, absence of a strong proletarian skeleton reduces the power of the national movement and has a negative effect on its results. This was during the famous defence of Shanghai against the Japanese invaders in 1932, when our Party, in spite of all the efforts and energetic actions which it performed was not able to paralyse the treachery of the Kuomintang and defend Shanghai from the Japanese interventionists. For this reason we are unceasingly struggling to strengthen our positions in the working class to increase the organisation of the proletariat and develop and widen its economic and political struggle in every way. This is why you are also faced with the same most urgent task of increasing contacts with the working masses developing their struggle and converting the proletariat into a uniting and leading force of the general national movement.

There is no doubt that the conditions for solving this task are very favourable. In the last few months the manufacturers of your country have carried on a new attack on the wages of the workers. In the textile industry of Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places,

wages are being cut down by 22 to 30 per cent and the workers being the transferred from 2 to 4 looms. On the railways there is continued dismissals of workers, wages are reduced and trade unions are refused to be recognised. The working class in India is developing its resistance. Strikes are increasing. The slogan of the general strike has become a slogan of action in Bombay. Even the national-reformists are compelled to recognised it.

The growing wave of the economic struggle demands from you to overcome your weaknesses at once. With Bolshevik directness we must state that the experience of the strikes in 1932-33 testifies once more that you have not yet learnt to build a mass trade union organisation, you do not know how to work well in the factories, you do not organise and attract active workers into the struggle and into the Party, you do not carry on everyday organisational preparatory work, you do not take the initiative into your hands in this struggle for the unity of the working class, you do not adopt the tactics of the united front in the workers' organisations and do not carry on work in the reformists trade unions.

We wish here to call your attention to a most serious mistake made by some Indian Communists, who confuse the role of the Party and the trade unions and are unable to take the lead in the struggle for the unity of the proletariat. It seems to us that the absence of a Communist Party explains the fact that the processes of the separating out of the revolutionary wing of the proletariat in 1929-32 from national-reformism took the form of splitting the trade unions, splits provoked by the national-reformists. The Red Trade Unions which to a certain extent, owing to confusion, replaced the party, served as the only arena on which the ideological and organisational separation of the Communists from reformism took place. Some Indian Communists were unable to understand that the struggle against reformism does not necessarily mean a split in the mass organisation and should not leave to the Communists and class-conscious workers leaving those trade unions which are headed by reformists and national-reformists. Such a sectarian policy has only strengthen the position of the bourgeoisie and their agents. At the same time some other Communists have not understood that the work in the reformists

trade unions or unity with the national-reformists trade union organisations (which you should not decline even now) presupposes a tireless struggle of the Communists against reformism, for Communist policy, for our slogans and proposals.

Agreements with the national-reformists in the trade unions strike committees for various campaigns and concrete mass actions or even the unity of the Red and national-reformists trade unions to places where the latter have the masses with them, must not lead to the abandonment of the independence of the Communist Party, the abandonment of our principles, the abandonment of the open defence and propaganda of our views and our right to criticise and expose the vacillations and treachery of the national-reformists.

The failure to understand the mistake of both these views the basic reason why some Communists have not been able to take the initiative and correctly carry on the struggle for the unity of the working class. This is the basis of confusion which exist on the question of Kandalkar & Co. The struggle against Kandalkar and other "left" national-reformists does not mean refusal to work in the reformists trade unions, does not mean to refuse to carry on the tactic of the united front with working class organisations or even the joining together of the Red and mass national-reformists trade unions. This is important to understand. This is necessary to carry on, particularly at the present period of growing economic and political struggle. The success of the resistance of the workers to the attacks of the factory owners and the imperialist depends on the rapid formation of Communist organisations, the formation of mass trade unions based on the factory committees, energetic everyday practical work and the correct carrying on of the tactic of the united front, aimed at the wide mobilisation of masses of proletariat.

The Indian Communists must strive in every way to secure the further development of the strike movement, organised and lead the economic struggles. Every effort must be used to develop political strikes, to prepare and carry on strikes at first on the local scale, on the scale of various towns and individual branches of industry, pursuing the general line of preparing and conducting general political strikes in all or many industrial centres of the

country. Even while organising political strikes it is necessary along with anti-imperialists and other political slogans to put forward economic demands which are closed and vital for all the workers, including the most backward strata of the working class. It is necessary to begin serious work in the reformists trade unions and in every kind of mass reformists organisation, with the aim of winning over to our side the masses who are in this organisation.

“In order to be able to help the ‘masses’ and to win their sympathy, the support of the masses”, we must not fear difficulties not fear criticism, obstructions, abuses, persecution by the ‘leaders’ (who as opportunists and social-chauvinists, in most cases are directly or indirectly connected with the bourgeoisie and the police) and work in the places where the masses are to be found was the teaching of Lenin, and we must not forget it and neglect it, for that would be only to the benefit of our class enemies.

At the same time we must in every way strengthen the class Red trade unions, must start to form factory committees genuine elected management committees of trade unions, organise the unemployed masses around their vital demands and build up detachments of self-defence of the working class. This advice is confirmed by all our experience of struggle.

We have spoken of the tremendous importance which the strike movement has possessed and still possesses in China. But there is no doubt that in India where the working class is more numerous than in our country, the strike as the proletarian method of struggle will still more be the means of bringing the toiling masses into revolutionary motion and will be the most characteristic phenomenon in the wave like growth of decisive events.

This is why it seems to us that the Indian Communists must remember the directions given by Lenin in respect to Russia in the conditions of the upsurge of the workers movements in 1913:

“The workers will direct their whole attention to supporting developing and strengthening the spontaneously growing revolutionary strikes consciously for the preparation of revolts of the peasants and the soldiers so that all the peasants and all the troops will know about the stubborn struggles of the workers so that even the most distant village will see that all is not quite in the

town that there own friends have risen, that they are fighting a life and death struggle, that, they are struggling for a better life, for higher wages, for the abolition of the arbitrary license of the Government, for handing over the landlords, land to the peasants, for the overthrow the landlords, monarchy of the Czar for the Republic. The restrained discontent and the angry murmurs of the villages, together with the indignation in the barracks must find a centre of attraction in the revolutionary strike of the workers. We must work for this untiringly and we shall see the day when the proletariat together with the peasants and the soldiers will overthrow the landlords, overthrow the Czarist monarchy by a national revolt."

The task of the Indian Communists consists precisely of linking up and basing themselves on the numerous and growing forces of the proletariat, by the correct policy, winning over the majority of the working class, developing their strikes struggles and mobilising around them the toiling peasants and the urban poor, all those who are prepared to struggle for the independence of India. In working untiringly in this manner, the Indian proletariat together with the peasants will overthrow British Imperialism, overthrow the landlords by a national revolts.

The experience of our revolution, which we wish to share with you, consists in the main in the struggle of the proletariat for the leadership of the Independence Movement, which is decisive for the fate of the revolution. But the hegemony of the proletariat presupposes the tireless work of the Party for strengthening the fighting alliance of the working class and the toiling masses of the peasants under the leadership of the proletariat. On the enormous territory of China we have been able to develop and lead the struggle of the peasants masses against the landlord and the slavery of the money-lenders and the oppressions of the imperialists. At first this was achieved more easily in the places where the revolution of 1925-27 had prepared the ground. But we are making every effort to extend to all China the peasant work, led by the proletariat, so that all the Chinese peasants will be roused to the struggle and included in our influence; but in any case the legend, spread by our enemies, about the submissiveness of the Chinese masses about

their unbroken sleep for centuries. about their passivity and the impossibility of the using them as a powerful reserve of revolutionary forces, their alleged lack of interest in the anti-imperialists struggle—this legend has been finally buried by the revolutionary practice of our country.

We do not doubt that you will be faced with similar achievements if you increase much agitation among the peasants, if you organise the resistance of the peasant masses against the new attacks of the Government organs and the attacks of the feudalists, if you take advantage of every peasant action, of every form of organisation of the peasant masses for contacts with them and for extending their struggles. The Communists of India must develop the movement for the non-payment of rent and taxes, must create peasant committees and committees of struggles, supporting and extending the partisan struggle. By carrying out these tasks, it will not be difficult for you in the future to rouse the struggle of the peasant masses to a higher level, to the level of the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution which will sweep away the rule of the hated British Imperialism along with feudalism.

The struggle for influence among the masses, the struggle for the development of the independent revolutionary mass movement cannot take place successfully unless there is a determined and consistent exposure of the entire policy and action of the National Congress, the national-reformists and the national revolutionary leaders. Concealing themselves behind speeches on national unity and the general national interest, speeches about the non-class character of the National Congress, the bourgeoisie and their national-reformists agents try to utilise the hatred of the toiling masses towards the imperialists oppressors in such a way as to strengthen their (the bourgeoisie) influence and convert the proletariat into their appendage. We must paralyse their attempts to the up the masses and to exert influence on them. The agitation of our Party must be sharpened specially against the so-called “left” national-reformists, who use revolutionary phraseology with demagogic aims. The exposure of the national-reformists can only be successful if the Communist Party carries on practical work and a struggle to mobilise the masses around its slogans and partial



demands. The victory of the Indian people will be impossible unless the masses are liberated from the influence and leadership of the national-reformists, unless an independent Communist Party is formed and leads the struggle of the entire people.

We have returned once again to the question of the Communist Party but now we wish to deal with it from another angle. During the comparatively short period that our party has existed, we have had to carry on a struggle inside the party against the Schendu-Du-ism, Putschism, Li-Li-Hsian-ism, Luchsn-Lun-ism, Trotaskyism, liquidstorkism etc. Only an unexampled, merciless and decisive struggle against deviations in the ranks of the Communist Party itself enable us to find the correct solutions of the complicated tasks which were put before us by the revolution. The struggle on two fronts in theory and practice was, and is, the basis of the activity of our party. We have carried on an untiring struggle inside the party against the "right" opportunists and "left" Putschist sectarian deviations, for ideological Bolshevik uniformity, for a correct solution of the tasks which face us for a sound political line and the undeviating and consistent carrying out of this line.

You are faced with the tasks of the everyday struggle for the Bolshevisation of your ranks, to overcome definitely witnesses and mistakes increase the fighting ability of the Communist Vanguard. You have to overcome lagging behind the Party organisations in respect to the tempo of development the mass revolutionary movement. You must struggle against petty-bourgeois individualism and self-centered pride, which hinders the consolidation of the Party. You must struggle against those who deny the necessity or oppose the formation of an underground All-Indian Communist Party who neglect to use legal possibilities, who occupy a leftist position, who give up the role of initiators in the strike struggle, who show any irresoluteness in exposing the Congressites and the reformist leaders, who drag the Communists away from democratic movements and the anti-imperialist struggle.

Every Party member must become conscious that there is nothing higher for him than the interests of the party. You must convert the Communist Party into a proletarian Party both in its composition and in regards to the role of the workers in its leading organs. You

must fearlessly and systematically recruit advanced workers for the Party, active participators in the anti-imperialists and strike struggles. You must form factory Party groups, making out of every factory your fortress. You must avoid the danger of replacing the development of the mass struggle by combinations of leaders which was the fault of many of our local Party organisations and which was the result of the Kuomintang traditions. This is a mistake of some of your Communists who follow the organisational principles of the National Congress and replace the organisation of the masses by the organisation of a small group of leaders. You must create underground and legal printed organs of the Party which will play the role of collective agitator, propagandist and organiser of the masses. You must establish the unity of the Communist Party by the preliminary unification of scattered groups in every town and province into united local organisations, organising provincial conferences and preparing and carrying through an All-Indian Conference. In our opinion these are the chief organisational and political tasks and unless they are carried out the Indian Communist will not be able to carry on their historically important and great role as the vanguard and leader of the toiling masses.

Dear Comrades! We feel really proud when you, in your leaflets, when speaking of the advantages of the Soviet form of Government, not only refer to the experience of the U.S.S.R. but to China as well. But we did not gain these victories at once. We had to overcome enormous difficulties that steeled us in this struggle. The development of our Chinese Communist Party, the growth of the confidence of the toilers to our Party, were built up as the result, first of the stubborn building up of our independent proletarian Party, by a tireless and irreconcilable struggle for its Bolshevisation, for its ideological and organisational consolidation, by a determined struggle on two fronts ("left" sectarianism and "right-wing" opportunism) against all deviations; second as the result of the decisive exposure and a merciless struggle against national-reformism and other imperialist, and bourgeois agents; third, as the result of the struggle of our Party to widen the movement and win the leadership of the anti-imperialist movements; fourth, as the result of our efforts to organise and lead the strike movement,

the economic and political struggles of the working class; fifth, as the result of bringing millions of peasants under our influence and by leading the agrarian revolution; sixth, as the result of the awakening of the masses and the consolidation of the hegemony of the proletariat.

It would be a criminal and boasting thing, unworthy of Bolsheviks, if we considered that we had completely solved all the tasks facing us, because we have not yet succeeded to the extent necessary. But we are on the way towards this and we are firmly convinced that both you and we will solve these tasks, will ensure the victorious result in the forthcoming decisive revolutionary fights. It would be wrong to transfer mechanically Chinese experience to India. You, undoubtedly, will take into account all concrete conditions and features which are peculiar to your movement, to the conditions of the struggle of Indian toiling masses. In China, as it is known, the revolutionary situation has developed, and on a considerable territory the Soviet revolution is developing successfully, the Chinese Red Army has achieved considerable victories.

The conditions in your country, in spite of the growing revolutionary upsurge, still do not coincide with ours. You must give correct estimation of the depth and breadth of the revolutionary movement, of the degree of differentiation of class forces, of the strength and influence of the Communist Party, so that having this determined, decide about your concrete tactical tasks, basing yourselves upon the decisions of the Sixth World Congress of the C.I.

The present international situation confronts us with the most complicated and responsible tasks. British Imperialism has taken the initiative and is preparing intervention against the U.S.S.R. At the same time Japanese imperialism has occupied Manchuria and North China, and is trying to convert these territories into a base for an attack on the country of victorious proletarian dictatorship—the U.S.S.R. The contradictions between the imperialist powers are growing, and a new world war is rapidly approaching. A powerful revolutionary front of the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples of the colonies is growing, widening and

strengthening against the magnates of finance-capital, these provocateurs of a new world slaughter and intervention in the U.S.S.R. against these oppressors and enslavers of the toiling masses. The revolutionary upsurge is growing throughout the world. We are entering on a new period of revolution and wars. In this condition our Party has a serious and responsible role to play. The task of the Chinese and Indian Communists, together with the international proletariat is to smash the plans of the imperialists, to carry on an energetic struggle for the interests of the workers and peasants, systematically strengthening the camp of revolution.

Through intense, everyday active work, the Communist everywhere must prepare the masses of the people. The time is approaching for decisive fights.

The foremost and most important task of the Indian Communist remains the task of uniting their forces.

Forward to the formation of the All-Indian Communist Party!

With fighting Communist greetings.

— Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of China—

July 16, 1933.

# **Draft Political Theses of the Communist Party of India Adopted by the Provisional Central Committee in December 1933(\*)**

## **I. MAIN TASKS OF THE INDIAN REVOLUTION**

The Indian people are groaning under the yoke and the exploitation of British Imperialism. Relying upon their political and economic supremacy and squeezing billions of rupees year by year out of the miserable income of India, the blood-thirsty imperialists have brought the toiling masses of the people to a state of famine, hopeless poverty, intolerable slavery and mass extinction as a people.

With all the power of the State in hands, controlling the main branches of industry, railways, sea and river transport, banks and the credit system, the greater part of the land, forests, and the irrigation system, British Imperialism has retarded and still obstructs the economic development of our country in every supporting and relying upon all that is backward and reactionary in the country.

*THE SUPREMACY OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM IS THE BASIS OF THE BACKWARDNESS, POVERTY AND ENDLESS SUFFERING OF OUR PEOPLE.* Only by the merciless and violent destruction of the political and economic supremacy of the British Imperialist will the working class of India succeed in rising to their feet, achieving independence, and creating the conditions requisite for their further development, and for the reconstruction of society in the interest of the workers and peasants, and with the purpose of developing further towards socialism.

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In the enslavement of the Indian people British Imperialism relies upon the native princes the landlords, the money-lenders and the merchants, utilising the assistance of the national bourgeoisie. The system of land-ownership by the landlords, native princes and money-lenders and the relics of serfdom in the land system of India (and consequently in all India's social and political institutions) represent the main bulwark of British supremacy.

*IN ORDER TO DESTROY THE SLAVERY OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE AND EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING -CLASS AND PEASANTS FROM THE POVERTY WHICH IS CRUSHING THEM DOWN, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO WIN THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COUNTRY AND TO RAISE THE BANNER OF AGRARIAN REVOLUTION WHICH WOULD SMASH THE SYSTEM OF LANDLORDISM SURVIVING FROM THE MIDDLE AGES AND WOULD CLEANSE THE WHOLE OF THE LAND FROM ALL THIS MEDIEVAL RUBBISH. AN AGRARIAN REVOLUTION, AGAINST BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND LANDLORDISM MUST BE THE BASIS FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY EMANCIPATION OF INDIA.*

Linked up as it is with the system of landlordism and usury, and terrified at the thought of a revolutionary insurrection by the toiling masses, the capitalist class has long betrayed the struggle for independence of the country and the radical solution of the agrarian problem. Its present "opposition" represents merely manoeuvres with British Imperialism calculated to swindle the mass toilers and at the same time to secure the best possible terms of compromise with the British robbers. The assistance granted to British Imperialism by the capitalist class and its political organisation, the National Congress, takes the shape at the present time of a consistent policy of compromise with British Imperialism at the expense of the people. It takes the form of disorganisation of the revolutionary struggle of the people. The meaning of this compromise is that they want to keep intact the imperialist system including the native states and the system of landlordism, to enjoy the reinforced exploitation jointly with the imperialists, of the mass of people, of the working class in particular. *THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE VICTORY OF THE INDIAN REVOLUTION IS THE FACT THAT GREAT MASSES OF OUR PEOPLE STILL*

*HARBOUR ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONGRESS AND NOT REALISE THAT IT REPRESENTS A CLASS ORGANISATION OF THE CAPITALISTS WORKING AGAINST THE FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS OF THE TOILING MASSES OF OUR COUNTRY.*

The policy of Gandhism, on which the programme of the Congress is founded, uses the cloak of vague phrases about love, meekness, modest and hardworking existence, lightening the burden of the peasantry national unity, the special historical mission of Hinduism, etc. But under this cloak it preaches and defends the interests of the Indian capitalists, the inevitability of the division of society into rich and poor, eternal social inequality and exploitation. That is, it preaches the interests of the capitalist development of India on the bones and sweat of the working masses of the people, in alliance with world Imperialism. The National Congress betrayed and disorganised the struggle of the toilers in 1919-21. The National Congress supported the manufacturers against the workers during the textile strikes and in fact assisted in the passing of anti-labour legislation. The National Congress refused to support the fight of the railwaymen against British Imperialism, suggesting that they should ask Lord Irwin and MacDonald to arbitrate. The National Congress opposed the peasantry in their struggle against the money-lenders, the big landlords and the native princes.

Jointly with the Liberals, the landlords and manufacturers, the National Congress had produced the anti-popular Nehru Constitution, in which it declared the necessity of preserving the landlords, the rajas, and the money-lenders, remaining as a junior partner in the British empire and leaving supreme authority in the hands of the British Viceroy and the Governors.

The National Congress issued the Delhi Manifesto supporting Gandhiji's eleven points which represented the moderate programme of the Chambers of Commerce and similar associations. It carried on negotiations with the Liberals in the prison, trying behind the scenes to come to an understanding with the British Government and so forth. *THE NATIONAL CONGRESS AND PARTICULARLY IT'S "LEFT-WING" HAVE DONE AND ARE DOING ALL IN THEIR POWER TO RESTRAIN THE STRUGGLE OF*

*THE MASSES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE BRITISH IMPERIALIST CONSTITUTION AND LEGISLATION.*

*IN THIS CONNECTION WORLD HISTORY AND THE LESSONS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN INDIA PROVE THAT ONLY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE WORKING CLASS CAN ENSURE THE FULFILMENT OF THE HISTORIC TASK OF EMANCIPATION OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE, ABOLISHING NATIONAL SLAVERY, SWEEPING ASIDE ALL FETTERS WHICH CHECK NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CONFISCATING THE LAND, AND EFFECTING FOR REACHING DEMOCRATIC RECONSTRUCTION OF A REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTER.* The working class in India, organised by the industrial process itself and by the class struggle, will, under the leadership of its Communist vanguard, perform its historic task of organising the scattered masses of peasantry and town poor for struggle against British domination and landlordism.

But in order to organise the mass of the workers, in order to rally the proletarians, a distinct class force, conscious of its distinct class interest and fighting for the leadership of the national movement for emancipation; in order to bring about the revolutionary alliance of the working class and peasantry in order to liberate the working class, the peasantry and the town poor from the hands of the national reformism and direct their revolutionary struggle towards an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution, for all these purposes, the working class requires its own proletarian Communist Party.

The Communist Party of India is the party of the working class, the final aim of which is the achievement of socialism and ultimately of complete communism. The programme of the Communist Party of India is totally different in principle from the programme and ideas of the bourgeoisie, not excepting the national revolutionary parties. While the latter are striving for the development of Capitalism in India, the Communist Party is consistently and firmly fighting for a socialist path of development. While the national revolutionary groups are fighting for bourgeois rule and a bourgeois form of Government,



the Communist Party of India is fighting for the democratic dictatorship of the working- class and the peasantry, a workers' and peasants' Soviet Government in India.

The only form of Government which can safeguard the interests of the workers, and peasantry and toilers generally, is the Soviets. The Soviets set up in the course of the revolutionary revolt of the working masses, as insurrectionary bodies for the overthrow of the British supremacy, will be the sole genuine seats of authority, elected directly in the factories, works and villages, etc., ensuring confiscation of the land and the satisfaction of the vital needs of the masses of the people. The Soviet Government will alone be capable of ensuring the national minorities their right to self determination, including that of complete separation, at the same time achieving the maximum unity in the ranks of the toilers of the various nationalities, engage in common revolutionary struggle against the enemies of the Indian revolution. The Soviet Government will alone be able to effect an alliance with the world proletariat for the purpose of defending the liberty and the achievements of the Indian revolution against the attacks of world Imperialism and the Indian exploiters. Only such a Government will be able to make an alliance with all other Soviet States against international Imperialism and for the final victory of the world revolution.

*FIRMLY AND COURAGEOUSLY, NOTWITHSTANDING ANY SACRIFICES, THE COMMUNIST PARTY WILL DEFEAT THE DISORGANISING AND TREACHEROUS WORK OF THE NATIONALIST REFORMISTS. IT WILL ORGANISE THE MASSES OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS AND LEAD THEM TO VICTORY OVER IMPERIALISM, AND TAKE THE LEAD IN THE FURTHER MARCH TOWARDS SOCIALISM.*

Adopting these as its guiding principles, the Communist Party of India advances the following main objects for the present stage of the Indian revolution:

1. The complete independence of India by the violent overthrow of the British rule. The cancellation of all debts, the confiscation and nationalisation of all factories, banks, railways, sea and river transport and plantations;

2. Establishment of a Soviet Government. The realisation of the rights of national minorities to self-determination, including separation. Abolition of the native states. The creation of an Indian Federal Workers' and Peasants' Republic;

3. The confiscation without compensation of all land, forest & other property of the landlords, ruling princes, churches, the British Government officials and money-lenders and handing them over for the use of the toiling peasantry. Cancellation of slave agreements and all the indebtedness of the peasantry to money-lenders and banks;

4. The eight-hour working day and the radical improvement of the conditions of labour. Increase of wages and state maintenance for the unemployed.

The Communist Party of India will fight for these main demands which express the interests of the mass of the people and achievements of which will create the conditions for and render possible further developments in the direction of the building of a socialist state of society in India. At the same time, with the object of developing the mass revolutionary struggle and revolutionary education of the mass of toilers, the C.P. of India puts forward partial demands, the struggle for which will facilitate the mobilisation of the mass of the people in revolutionary insurrection for its emancipation.

## **II. THE RIGHT FOR PARTIAL DEMANDS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**

The Communist Party of India considers that the whole and historically tested means of winning independence, carrying out of the agrarian revolution and achieving democratic reconstruction, *IS THE PATH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE OF THE WIDEST POSSIBLE MASS OF THE PEOPLE, DEVELOPING INTO A GENERAL NATIONAL ARMED INSURRECTION AGAINST THE BRITISH EXPLOITERS AND ALL THEIR ALLIES IN OUR COUNTRY.*

The propaganda of non-violence of Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders of the National Congress is intended to prevent a general national armed insurrection of the toiling masses against British

rule. By his own confession in his own autobiography, Gandhi took part in the armed suppression of the rising Zulu peasants in South Africa and assisted the British robbers in their fight against the German Capitalists for the right to exploit colonial people. Gandhi recruited Indian peasants into the British Army and sent to their deaths hundreds of thousands of Indian workers and peasants in the interests of the British robbers. And today Gandhi tells the peasants and workers of India that they have no right to and must not revolt against their exploiters. He tells them that at the very time when the British robbers are making open war on the Indian people in the North Western Frontier Province and throughout the country.

The toiling masses will understand this double game of the National Congress. The workers and peasants will not give up their right to smash the whole feudal and imperialist system of exploitation, and *THEIR RIGHT TO BRING ABOUT THE VIOLENT OVERTHROW OF BRITISH RULE.*

The emancipation of India cannot be achieved by a terrorist movement. The supporters of the terrorist movement of our country do not see and do not believe in the struggle of the broad masses of the people and do not understand the connection between the agrarian revolution and the struggle of the working class and the overthrow of the British domination. They try by single-handed and brave terrorist acts to achieve victory over British Imperialism.

While recognising the sacrifice and devotion of the terrorists in the cause of the national emancipation of India, the Communist Party of India declares that the road to victory is not the method of individual terrorism but the struggle and armed insurrection of the widest possible masses of the working class, the peasantry, the poor of the towns and the Indian soldiers around the banner and under the leadership of the Communist Party of India.

The most harmful and dangerous obstruction to the Indian revolution is the agitation carried on by the "left" elements of the National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose and others. Under the cloak of revolutionary phraseology they carry on the bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the masses, and help the Congress to come to an

understanding with the British Imperialism. Particularly backwardly and harmful is the part played by the national reformists in the labour movement, in which they try in every possible way to substitute the method of class collaboration for the method of struggle, doing their best to bring the workers under the influence of the ideals and organisation of the Indian and British exploiters. The treacherous part played by National Congress as regards the peasantry has once again shown itself in the appeal of the "left" Congress leaders to British Governor of Bengal to send troops to control the peasants revolts at Kishoregunj. In these circumstances some of the "left" national reformists (supporters of Roy and others) who realise that the masses (have become disillusioned) are becoming disillusioned with the Congress have cleverly put forward the advice to "win" the Congress from within. Nominally their object is to revolutionise the Congress. In reality it is to restore the prestige of the Congress by replacing the old treacherous leaders by new leaders who are no better than the old ones.

The exposure of the "left" Congress leaders, who once again undertake to set up a new party organisation like the former League for Independence, in order once again to bamboozle the mass of the workers is the primary task of our party — *RUTHLESS WAR ON THE "LEFT" NATIONAL REFORMIST IS AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION IF WE ARE TO ISOLATE THE LATTER FROM THE WORKERS AND MASS OF THE PEASANTRY AND MOBILISE THE LATTER UNDER THE BANNER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST AGRARIAN REVOLUTION IN INDIA.*

The Communist Party of India calls upon all the toilers to form a united front against the imperialists, the landlords, the money-lenders and the capitalists. The C.P. of India calls upon the Muslim and Hindu workers and peasants not to be tricked by the cunning provocative methods of the British Imperialist Government and the reactionary native exploiters, who set up the toilers of the different nationalities and the religious beliefs against one another and provoke conflicts between them. The C.P. of India calls upon all the toilers, including the untouchables (pariahs) not to permit such disorganisation and splitting of the united revolutionary front

of the oppressed, who suffer equally at the hands of their own and the British exploiters.

In its struggle to win the leadership of the masses, the C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to make resolute use of any legal and semi-legal opportunity for publication and mobilisation of the masses around working class slogans. On every occasion they must expose the treacherous part played by the National Congress. Against the bourgeois front of compromise established by the National reformism they must create united front of the toilers from below on the basis of definite proletarian revolutionary demands and activities.

As one of the practical means of explaining to the toiling masses of India, the exploiting and treacherous policy of the Congress leaders, the C.P. of India recommends to its supporters to make use of their activity in the trade unions, municipal councils (Calcutta, Bombay etc.) and similar institutions.

The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters and organisations to develop mass revolutionary activities and the struggle of the working class for their political and economic demands, mass refusal by the peasants to pay the taxes, levies, rent, debts, particularly in the districts where there are large landed estates — thereby mobilising and preparing the mass of toilers for the revolutionary struggle against Imperialism. *THE C.P. OF INDIA CALLS UPON ALL THE CLASS CONSCIOUS WORKERS AND THE REVOLUTIONARIES TO ASSIST IN TRANSFORMING THE INDIVIDUAL STRIKES OF WORKERS INTO A GENERAL POLITICAL STRIKE, AS A RESOLUTE STEP IN ORGANISING THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE OF THE MASS OF THE PEOPLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, LAND, AND A WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' GOVERNMENT UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE WORKING CLASS*

#### **A. General Demands:**

In order to develop mass revolutionary struggle and political training of the people, the C.P. of India puts forward and fights for the following demands:

1. Expulsion of the British troops, abolition of and general armaments of the toilers;

2. Immediate liberation of all political prisoners, including those who have committed acts of individual and mass violence;
3. Unlimited freedom of speech, conscience, press, meetings, strike, and associations of the toilers, and abolition of all anti-popular and anti-labour laws (Trade Disputes Act, the Prohibition of picketing, the regulations for the deportation of revolutionary workers, press act etc.);
4. Abolition of rank, castes, national and communal privilege and the full equality of all citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, and race;
5. Complete separation of the religion from the State, and the expulsion of the Missionaries as direct agents of the imperialists with confiscation of their property;
6. Judges and officials to be appointed by popular vote, and to be removed at any time on the demand of the majority of electors.

### **B. Special Workers' Demands:**

In order to organise the widest masses of the working class, defend the day to day interest of the workers, and maintain the general revolutionary struggle of the toiling masses in our country, the C.P. of India calls upon all the class-conscious workers to concentrate all the efforts on the creation of a Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. The C.P. of India deems it essential to organise mass Trade Union Movement based on the factory committees, with the leadership elected directly by the workers and consisting of advanced revolutionary workers. The Trade Unions must become regular functioning mass organisations working in the spirit of class struggle and all efforts must be made to expel and isolate reformists of all shade from the open agent of British Capitalism just as Joshi, Chimanlal, Giri, etc. to the sham "left" national reformists such as Bose, Ruikar, Ginwala, etc. and other agents of Indian bourgeoisie, who constitute reactionary bloc for joint struggle against Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. At the same time the C.P. of India works for the transformation of the All-India Trade Union Congress into a fighting All-India Centre of the labour movement on a class basis.

1. The C.P. of India calls upon all its supporters and class workers to help the organising of factory committees in all factories, railways, docks etc., throughout the country. In cases where owing to victimisation of the employers or British authorities the factory committees have to work semi-legally, the C.P. advocates putting forward the demand for recognition of the factory committees as one of the principal demands in the strike movements. The C.P. of India calls for the country-wide organisation of workers Defence Detachments, both to defend the workers' strikes and demonstrations and to take part in the general revolutionary struggle.

2. The C.P. of India calls upon all class-conscious workers to help the party to organise the movement and the struggle of the unemployed for regular relief at the expense of the State and the employers. It calls for the country-wide organisations of unemployed councils, demonstrations and joint struggles with the workers in the industry for the partial demands of the unemployed— monthly unemployment benefit at the cost of the living minimum, refusal to pay rent, free supply of fuel and food-stuffs by the Municipal authorities etc.

3. Taking note of the semi-slave conditions of the plantations and agricultural workers, the C.P. of India calls upon the class-conscious workers to take part and assist in the organisations of Trade Unions of plantation and agricultural workers. The fight for the complete abolition of serfdom, compulsory and contract labour, deprivation of rights and unprecedented expropriation of the agricultural proletariat is one of our main aims, linked up closely with the aim of mobilising the broad masses of peasantry to fight imperialistic and feudal exploitations under the leadership of the proletariat.

4. With the object of protecting the working class from physical and moral degeneration and also in order to raise its capacity to fight for emancipation, the C.P. of India fights for—

(a) Limitation of the working day to eight hours for adults and four hours for youths from 16 to 20. Introduction of the six-hour working day in all harmful industries including coal mining and free supply of milk and butter to the workers in these industries:

(b) Complete freedom of Trade Unions, demonstrations, picketing and strikes;

(c) Equal pay for equal work for men, women and youth;

(d) Complete abolition of compulsory contract labour and system of legal bondage of the workers;

(e) A compulsory weekly rest period with full pay and a paid annual holiday of four weeks for adults and six weeks for youths;

(f) State insurance against unemployment, sickness, accidents industrial diseases, old age loss of working capacity, orphanage and compensation for disablement;

(g) Establishment of a state minimum wage of Rs.50/- a month prohibition of the contract system and establishment by law of weekly payment of wages;

(h) Prohibition of reductions from wages for any reason or purpose whatsoever (fines, bad work etc.)

(i) Introduction of properly organised factory inspection, workers' elected members thereof to supervise labour conditions in all factories employing hired labour;

(j) The abolition of the system of hiring workers through jobbers, sarangs, etc., employment and dismissals of workers to take place through labour exchange, controlled and supervised by Trade Unions. The abolition of all caste and feudal customs and regulations within the factory.

In addition the C.P. of India supports and fights for each and every demand intended to improve the conditions of the workers (building of new houses at Government and employers expense, provision for proper lavatories, clean dining rooms etc.).

The C.P. of India is definitely against the arbitration and interference by the capitalists arbitration courts. It emphasises most definitely that the sole means of winning any serious concessions on the part of the exploiters is resolute class struggle by strikes and mass revolutionary activities.

### **C. Peasants Demands:**

1. The C.P. of India fights for the confiscation without compensation of all lands and estates, forests and pastures of native



princes, landlords money-lenders and British Government and the transference to the peasant committees for use by the toiling masses of the peasantry. The C.P. of India fights for the complete wiping out of the medieval system of land holding, to cleanse the whole of the land from the rubbish of the middle ages.

2. The C.P. of India fights for the immediate confiscation of all plantations and their transference to the revolutionary committees elected by the plantation workers. The allotment to which the planters assign their contract workers, and also the land not in cultivation to be handed over to the labourers and poor peasants as their property. At the same time the C.P. of India is in favour of the nationalisation of large-scale mechanically equipped plantations and workshops connected wherewith for utilisation in the interests of the whole Indian people.

3. The C.P. of India fights for the immediate nationalisation of the whole system of irrigation, complete cancellation of all the indebtedness and taxes and the transference of the control and supervision of the work of irrigation to revolutionary peasant committees elected by the working peasantry.

4. In order to disorganise the British rule and maintain revolutionary pressure against it, the C.P. of India calls upon the peasantry and agricultural proletariat to engage in all kinds of political demonstrations and collective refusals to pay taxes and dues or to carry out the orders and decisions of the Government and its agents.

5. The C.P. of India calls for refusals to pay rents, irrigation charges, and other extractions and refusal to carry out any labour services whatsoever (beggars) for the landlords, native princes and their agents.

6. The C.P. of India calls for refusal to pay debts and arrears to Government, landlords, money-lenders in any form whatsoever.

7. As a practical watchword for the campaign among the peasantry and as a means for developing more political consciousness in the peasant movement, the C.P. of India calls for immediate organisation of revolutionary peasant committees in order to carry on a fight to achieve all the revolutionary democratic

changes require in the interests of emancipating the peasantry from the yoke of the British Imperialism and its feudal allies.

8. The C.P. of India calls for the independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat particularly the plantation workers and its amalgamation with the proletariats of the town under the banner of the C.P. as well as its representation in peasant committees.

The C.P. of India is firmly convinced that the complete thorough going and permanent achievement of the above mentioned political and social changes is possible only by the overthrow of the British domination and the creation of a Federal Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic.

#### **D. Emancipation of Pariahs and Slaves**

As a result of the rule of British Imperialism in our country, there are still in existence millions of slaves and billions of socially outcast working pariahs, who are deprived of all rights. British rule, the system of landlordism the reactionary caste system, religious deceptions all the slave and serf conditions of the past throttle the Indian people and stand in the way of its emancipation. They have led to the result that in India, in the twentieth century, there are still pariahs who have no right to move with all their fellow men, drink from common wells, study in common schools, etc.

Instead of putting and end once for all to this shameful blot on the Indian people, Gandhi and the Congress leaders call for the maintenance of the caste system, which is the basis and the justification for the existence of the socially outcasts pariahs.

Only the ruthless abolition of the caste system, in its reformed Gandhist variety, only the agrarian revolution and violent overthrow of British rule, will lead to the complete social economic, cultural and legal emancipation of the working pariahs and slaves.

The C.P. of India calls upon all the pariahs to join in the united revolutionary front with all the workers of the country against British rule and landlordism. The C.P. of India calls upon all the pariahs not to give way to the tricks of the British and reactionary agents who try to split and set one against the other tailors of our

country.

The C.P. of India fights for the complete abolition of slavery, the caste system and caste inequality in all its form (social, cultural etc.). The C.P. of India fights for the complete and absolute equality of the working pariahs and all the toilers of our country.

#### **E. The Struggle for the Interest of the Town Petty-Bourgeoisie:**

The C.P. of India calls upon the working small producers in the towns to support the revolutionary struggle against British domination, the landlords, the princes and money-lenders.

The capitalist class and the Nationalist Congress in their search for a compromise with imperialism are betraying the interests not only of the workers and the peasants but also of the wide section of town petty-bourgeoisie (artisans, street traders etc.).

Only the complete abolition of the British rule, bringing in its train the liberation of our country, the radical alteration of the whole policy of the Government and the abolition of landlordism and survivals of serfdom throughout the Indian social order, will create the conditions requisite for developing the economic life of the town petty-bourgeoisie handicraft workers and the town poor.

The C.P. of India fights for the cancellation of all the usury which has enslaved the poor people of the towns. The C.P. of India fights for the cancellation of all direct and indirect taxes, excise and other forms of taxation of wages and small earnings, which are ruining the artisans, street traders, employees etc. It stands for the replacement of such taxes by progressive income tax on the capitalists bond holders, banks and inheritance. The C.P. of India fights for all revolutionary measures which serve the interests of the proletariat and are intended to improve the conditions of the town poor.

#### **F. Emancipation of the Toiling Women:**

The toiling women of India are in a semi-servile condition, under a double burden of the survivals of the feudalism, economic, cultural and legal inequalities. The toiling women have no right whatsoever to determine their fate, and in many districts are forced to drag out existence in pardah, under the veil, and without the

right not only of participating in public affairs but even of freely and openly meeting their fellow citizens and moving through the streets.

At the same time the exploitation and working conditions of the women workers are surely unheard of in their brutality and sweated character. The semi-slave conditions of women in India are the results of the wide-spread survival of relics of feudalism throughout the social order of the country and its careful preservation by the British Imperialism.

Nothing that the present bourgeois national women's organisation, the All India Women's Conference led by Sarojini Naidu, one of the leaders of the National Congress, is not carrying on a genuine struggle to emancipate women but in reality is co-operating with British Imperialism, the C.P. of India calls upon the working women of India to join the common revolutionary struggle for the toiling masses, under the leadership of the Communist Party, for the overthrow of the social order and the social system which gave rise to slave conditions of Indian women.

The C.P. of India fights for the complete social, economic and legal equality of women. It fights for the complete abolition of night work for women and the prohibition of the underground work for women (in the coal mines) and in all branches harmful for females.

The C.P. of India fights for leave of absence from work at full rates of wages, two months before and two months after the child birth with free medical aid, and for the establishment of "Creches" in all factories and workshops employing women at the expense of the employers, such creches to cover small children and infants at the breast, with a special apartment for feeding. Nursing mothers to have their working day reduced to six hours.

### **G. Soldiers' Demands:**

1. In the struggle for emancipation of our country, the C.P. of India calls for the spreading of the revolutionary propaganda among the soldiers and police and the explanation of necessity for their armed insurrection together with the toiling masses of the country, against British rule.

2. The Indian soldiers and police are socially in the main poor peasants, who have been forced to seek employment in the army by poverty, landlessness and hunger. The C.P. of India fights for the allotment of land to the soldiers equally with all other toiling peasants. The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to explain to the soldiers and ex-soldiers that the only means of acquiring land, abolishing indebtedness and getting work is the revolutionary overthrow of British and feudal supremacy.

3. The C.P. of India calls upon its organisation and class conscious workers and revolutionaries to begin organising revolutionary groups among the soldiers. The aim of the groups must be to persuade and prepare the soldiers to take action in support of the general armed insurrection of the people for liberty, land and a workers' and peasants' Soviet Government. It is necessary to explain to the soldiers by concrete examples drawn from the daily lives (arbitrary actions by the officers, shooting down of demonstrations, workers' strikes, etc., flagrant inequality of treatment of white and Indian soldiers, worse food, clothes, allowances etc.) that the Indian soldiers are only blind fools in the hand of the British robbers, who use them to maintain the national and social oppression of the toiling masses of our country.

4. The C.P. of India calls upon its supporters to organise the ex-soldiers, who have had practical proof of the swindling and exploiting character of British rule, to build up revolutionary ex-soldiers organisations among them and, wherever possible, fighting detachments to prepare aid support the future national insurrection and agrarian movement under the leadership of the Party.

5. The C.P. of India calls upon the class-conscious workers to organise fraternisation with Indian soldiers, with the object of establishing closest friendship, explaining the solidarity of the interests of the workers, peasants, and soldiers in the fight for freedom and the abolition of all sorts of exploitation.

## **H. Youth Demands:**

1. The C.P. of India calls upon the revolutionary working class youths to build up the Young Communist League of India, being

an illegal organisations owing to the complete lack of right and the prevailing terror, has as its object to organise the widest possible masses of the working class, peasants and revolutionary students, youth around the banner of the Communist Party, doing so either directly or through the medium of auxiliary legal or semi-legal mass organisations (youth sections in Trade Unions etc.).

2. The Y.C.L. of India as the helper of the Party has the special task of organising the working youth under the banner of the Communist Party. The Y.C.L. of India must come forward as a political organisation which subordinates all forms of struggles and mass organisation economic, cultural, sports etc., — to the interests of the political struggles, namely the overthrow of the Imperialist yoke and the winning of power by the working class and the peasantry.

3. The C.P. of India calls for the country wide organisation both of mixed and separate workers', peasants' and students' detachments both to defend the people's demonstrations, strikes, etc., and in order to make systematic preparations for the armed struggle of the Indian people.

4. The C.P. of India calls upon the honest revolutionary youths to help in spreading the political propaganda among the soldiers and police. The C.P. of India considers that the call of the "left" nationalists to the soldiers to leave the army and take their discharge in accordance with Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence is a mistake. The task of the genuine revolutionaries is to persuade the soldiers, while staying in the army, to prepare and raise, when time is ripe the banner of armed insurrection and shoulder to shoulder with the toiling people overthrow the British rule.

5. With the object of protecting the toiling youth against physical and cultural degeneration and in order to develop its revolutionary offensive for the national and social liberation of the toiling masses, the C.P. of India fights for the following:-

(a) Limitation of the working day to 4 hours for youths from 16 to 20. Prohibition of employment of children under 16.

(b) Universal free and compulsory education up to 16 years

*in the national language of the people. Free boarding, clothing and supply of text books to the children at the expense of the State.*

Introduction of vocational training for the youths at the expense of the state and employers.

(c) Paid weekly and annual (six weeks) holidays for youths.

(d) State maintenance of unemployed youths at rates equivalent to the cost of living.

## **The Conclusion:**

The Communist Party of India, putting forward its programme of demands of the Indian revolution calls upon the toiling masses to rally under the revolutionary banner of the party *AND CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE TO THE SUCCESSFUL CONQUEST OF POWER AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP OF THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PEASANTRY IN THE FORM OF THE SOVIETS.*

The C.P. of India declares that the successful solutions of the problems facing the revolution against feudalism and for emancipation will open up the possibility with the help of the international proletariat and the class offensive of the exploited masses of our country, of the revolution developing through a number of stages into proletarian revolution, thereby creating the (requisite) conditions for the development of our country on socialist lines, avoiding the further stage of domination of the capitalist system.

In this struggle, the Indian people are not alone. They have an ally in the revolutionary workers of all countries of the world. The workers of the whole world are fighting for the overthrow of international imperialism and the abolition of the whole system of capitalist exploitation which is now going through a profound crisis. The capitalist and feudal system of exploitation in India at present being combined with the world crisis, which leads to the great sharpening of all antagonisms, the approach of wars, the rise of a new wave of revolutionary struggles.

The growing crisis is producing the growth of stubborn resistance and counter-offensive on the part of the international proletariat and colonial peoples. The strength of the international revolution is growing. In one of the countries of the world, Soviet Russia, the working class has long ago overthrown the power of

the exploiters, and is successfully building up a socialist state of society. The workers of the Soviet Union have created the firm bulwark of the International Communist Movement, and are showing in practice how the world ought to be constructed in the interest of the workers and peasants. The Soviet Union is a reliable ally of the colonial peoples including the toilers of India. The toiling masses of India will receive the support of the revolutionary workers of all the countries, particularly developing Chinese revolution. *THE TOILING MASSES OF INDIA WILL ALSO BE SUPPORTED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS OF GREAT BRITAIN LED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN*, while the ruling Labour Party of MacDonald and the Independent Labour Party of Maxton and Brockway, who are part and parcel, and agents of British Imperialism will do every thing in their power to tighten and maintain the noose of slavery and poverty round the neck of Indian people, in spite of all devices of the imperialists and their reformist agents the revolutionary front of the world proletariat and the colonial people is growing stronger and stronger and wider every day.

*BUT TO ENSURE THE VICTORY OF INDIAN REVOLUTION, THERE IS REQUIRED A COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT, THE LEADER AND ORGANISER OF THE TOILING MASSES OF OUR COUNTRY.* The building of a centralised, disciplined, united mass underground Communist Party is today the chief and basic task, long age overdue, of the revolutionary movement for the emancipation of our country.

The C.P. of India declares with pride that it considers itself a part of the organised World Communist Movement, a section of the Communist International. *THE C.P. OF INDIA CALLS UPON ALL ADVANCED WORKERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF THE WORKING CLASS TO JOIN THE RANK OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY*, now being built in order to fight, to carry on the historic tasks of Indian revolution. In the condition of British supremacy and terrorism the Communist Party of India can exist and develop only as an underground party, applying and utilising all forms of legal and illegal activities to develop its mass struggles and to win the toiling masses for the fight for the



democratic dictatorship of the working- class and the peasantry, the Communist Party of India sets up its party organisations and groups in all towns and in all factories and workshops throughout the country.

The C.P. of India organises the working class and the basic masses of peasantry under the banner of the Indian Revolution. In spite of all difficulties, sacrifices and partial defeats in spite of all the attempts of the imperialists and the Indian bourgeoisie to separate the revolutionary movement of India from the International Proletariat *THE COMMUNIST PARTY WILL LEAD THE STRUGGLE OF THE TOILING MASSES TO THE COMPLETE OVERTHROW OF THE BRITISH RULE AND OF THE SYSTEM OF LANDLORDISM AND SERFDOM, in order thereafter TOGETHER WITH THE WORLD PROLETARIAT To MARCH FORWARD IN THE STRUGGLE TO SET UP A SOCIALIST SYSTEM OF SOCIETY IN OUR COUNTRY AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.*

*LONG LIVE INDEPENDENCE OF INDIA !*

*LONG LIVE THE WORKING CLASS , THE LEADER OF THE TOILING MASSES !*

*LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONARY INSURRECTION FOR INDEPENDENCE, LAND AND BREAD !*

*LONG LIVE THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS', SOVIET GOVERNMENT !*

*LONG LIVE THE WORLD REVOLUTION !*

## **“Congress Socialism” A Contradiction in Terms (\*)**

**Rajani Palme Dutt**

The appearance of a “Congress Socialist Group” in Bombay has given rise to widespread discussion in the ranks of the Indian National Movement. The programme of this group was issued in February, 1934, under the signatures of Krishna Menon, M. Shetty, M.R. Masani and others. It was issued with an approving letter from Jawaharlal Nehru, who stated that he “would welcome the formation of Socialist groups in the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress.” †

What is the significance of this development? What should be the attitude towards it of supporters of the fight for national and social liberation in India? Does this programme show the correct path forward for the fight?

An answer to these questions is essential at the present time, when the collapse of the Civil Disobedience Movement in ignominious capitulation has left a general confusion in the ranks of the national movement and a widespread seeking for new paths.

What is the situation in which this programme appears?

In May, 1934, took place the Patna Capitulation of the National Congress to the British Government. The Civil Disobedience campaign, which had been inaugurated with a flourish of trumpets in 1930, as the opening of the fight for absolute independence, was unconditionally called off. Council-entry was decided.

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(\*) A Critique of the Programme of the Bombay “*CONGRESS SOCIALIST GROUP*”, published by: “Indian Forum” October 1934, from London.

In June, 1934, the British Government raised the ban upon the National Congress and set the stamp of its approval upon it as a legal organisation.

In July, 1934, the British Government proclaimed the Communist Party of India an illegal organisation.

Here we have a chain of events, the significance of whose connection should be plain to the dullest. On the one hand, the British Government proclaims that the National Congress is no longer to be regarded as a dangerous enemy outside the law, but rather as a potential friend and ally. On the other hand, the British Government proclaims that its most dangerous enemy, against which its main fire is to be directed, is the young Communist Party of India.

### Shifting of Forces

This action of the British Government, which is a cunning and realist rule and knows what it is doing, reflects and lays bare to all the *Shifting of forces* which has taken place in the camp of the fight for emancipation in India. The national *bourgeoisie*, which led the Congress campaign, alarmed at the overwhelming forces of the mass movement and menace to its own interests revealed by even this incomplete and largely strangled fight, calls off the whole campaign and moves to closer co-operation with the British Government. The masses, betrayed by the Congress leadership, seek for new leadership for their struggle. This leadership can only be forthcoming from the organised working class, the sole force which fights imperialism and all exploitation to a finish. The party of the working class, the Communist Party, is revealed ever more clearly as the rising leader of the mass struggle in India. Increasing numbers of the previous supporters of the Congress begin to turn with greater and greater attraction to the revolutionary theory and programme of Communism as the only way.

It is at this point that the newly formed “Congress Socialist Group” is brought to the front, under the direct sponsorship of the official Congress leadership responsible for the capitulation, represented by Jawaharlal Nehru, and even with the blessing of Gandhi. Is it not obvious that we have here, not a genuine new

political programme and leadership, but a *manoeuvre of the bankrupt Congress leadership to conceal its bankruptcy and adapt its force under a new "socialist" coat of paint (the Nazis also call themselves "socialist") to the new currents among the masses?*

This may seem a harsh judgement to sincere elements among the new grouping who are drawn by the illusory hope of giving a "socialist direction" to the Congress and believe that here lies the path of advance. But it is essential that these sincere elements—like the sincere elements who were drawn by the "socialist" promises of the Nazis—should rid themselves of their illusions and realise that, on the basis of this "socialist" programme, under the auspices of the Congress, they are only being politically exploited for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.

### **Fundamentals of Socialism Omitted**

The character of the programme abundantly confirms this analysis.

What is Socialism? Socialism, by the consensus of the Socialist movement for decades in all countries, as well as by the teachings of Marxism, which is the theory of Socialism, is the movement for emancipation of the working class, leading all exploited strata, against the rule of the *bourgeoisie*, for the overthrow of *bourgeois* rule and for the establishment of the rule of the working class to build up the new society of collective production.

The heart of Socialism is the class struggle, the organisation of an independent political party of the working class separate from all other parties, the fight for the overthrow of the *bourgeoisie* (both the imperialist *bourgeoisie* and the Indian *bourgeoisie*), and for the dictatorship of the proletariat (in India, in alliance with the poor peasants).

*Of all this, the A B C of Socialism, there is no word in this precious "socialist" programme. There is no word of the class struggle. There is no word of the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no suggestion even of the necessity of an independent political party of the working class.*

These are no accidental "omissions". They are inherent in the whole character of the programme. The programme elaborately sets out its proposals for trade unions for the workers, for *kisan sanghs* for the peasants, for organisations for the small traders, artisans, tenants. But it makes no mention of the necessity for a political party of the working class.

Why?

Because *the real essence of the programme is the subordination of the working class and peasantry to the political leadership of the bourgeoisie, represented by the National Congress.*

### **Glaring Contradiction**

This is made abundantly clear, both by the programme statement and still more by the accompanying letter of Jawaharlal Nehru. The warning is constantly emphasised that the "socialist ideology", the economic organisation of the workers and peasants, must be kept *within the limits* of the political leadership of the National Congress--"must be related to the Congress struggle", in the words of Nehru, who warns against the "fashion for strong criticism of the Congress activities", and declares that "although ideologically backward, the Congress is undoubtedly to-day the most advanced effective (?) revolutionary (?) organisation in action (?) in India".

But since the Congress is the party of the Indian *bourgeoisie*, this means that the proposed "socialist" programme and organisation is to the political leadership of the *bourgeoisie*. The result is a complete contradiction from any Socialist point of view.

How is this glaring contradiction attempted to be converted? "Socialism" is presented as an "economic programme" to be tacked on to the "political" programme and leadership of the Congress. The weakness of the Congress, declares Nehru in his letter, is that it has confined itself to "pure politics" :--

"We in India cannot afford to remain in the backwater of pure politics. . . World events as well as the natural consequences of our mass struggles have forced the Congress to think, to some extent at least, in terms of economics".

Such an “economic” programme, he declares, is provided by Socialism, which can be “tacked on” to the Congress struggle provided any action is “co-ordinated” to the action of the Congress.

Gandhi, in a statement on the relationship of Socialism and the Congress, is even more explicit :--

“Mahatma Gandhi, in reply to a question regarding the attitude which Congressmen should take towards their Socialist friends, advised that they should offer complete co-operation to the Socialists in agitating for workers' and peasants' demands in the day-to-day struggle, but he asked the Congress workers to oppose the Socialists vigorously whenever their preaching went against the fundamental principles of the Congress creed and programme.”

## **Two opposing Political Lines**

Here, in the complementary statements of Nehru and Gandhi, we have a complete system. A familiar division of labour is proclaimed between the *bourgeois* leadership of the Congress and their “socialist” supporters. The task of the “socialists” is to preach an “economic” programme, to preach an “ideology” more suited to the moods of the masses, and to organise the workers and peasants on the basis of “day-to-day” demands. But politics and political leadership must be left to the *bourgeoisie*. This is in fact a gross and caricatured version of the line of “Economism” long ago criticised by Lenin (the theory that in the period up to the *bourgeois* democratic revolution the tasks of Socialist and working class organisation lie in the economic sphere, while the political leadership of the fight against autocracy must rest with the *bourgeoisie*). Here is nothing of the line of Socialism. But it is the familiar line of class-co-operation, of *bourgeois* politics in the working class.

The line of Socialism in India can only be the exact opposite. The contrast between the line of Socialism, the line of the working class and the line of the Congress, the line of the *bourgeoisie*, is not the contrast between an “economic” line and a “political” line. It is a contrast between *two opposing political lines*--the line of revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism and all class

exploitation, and the line of capitulation to and alliance with imperialism against the mass struggle. The working class, fighting for the ending of all class-exploitation, can alone lead the revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism to a finish. The *bourgeoisie*, seeking only to increase its share of exploitation in opposition to the privileged position of the imperialist *bourgeoisie*, necessarily fears the extension of the mass struggle which threatens to end all exploitation, and at every critical point draws closer to alliance with imperialism against it. Therefore the task of the Socialists in India, not only for the victory of the fight for social liberation, but equally for the victory of the fight for national liberation, must necessarily be to strive to establish *the hegemony of the working class in the mass struggle in opposition to the leadership of the national bourgeoisie, represented by the Congress.*

### **Build Independent Political Organisation**

But the hegemony of the working class in the mass struggle requires as its first condition *the independent political organisation of the working class*. This is the first task confronting all serious Socialists in India. Whoever renounces this task has nothing in common with Socialism. Only on the basis of the independent political organisation of the working class can the revolutionary national *bloc* of struggle be built up. Even when the national *bourgeoisie* temporarily enters into the common struggle, such temporary co-operation with the *bourgeoisie* for the purposes of the struggle can only be conditional on the complete political and organisational independence of the working class. This was shown in the experience of the Kuomintang in China. There the national *bourgeoisie* for a period joined in the common armed struggle against imperialism. Nevertheless, the working class and its party, the Communist Party, maintained its political and organisational independence within the common *bloc* of the Kuomintang. The correctness of this policy was shown when the Chinese *bourgeoisie*, led by Chiang Kai Shek, betrayed the national struggle in 1927 and entered into alliance with imperialism. Despite this heavy blow, the working class, led by the Communist Party, in alliance with the peasantry, was able to

carry on the fight and lead the way to the present victories of Soviet China, maintaining its independence and extending its range against all the attacks of imperialism. The whole of this process of the Chinese Revolution has profound lessons for India as to the correct path to follow.

The programme of the "Congress Socialist Group" of Bombay can therefore only be regarded as a false lead, calculated to confuse and distort the mass struggle and draw back the rising revolutionary Socialist and Communist currents in the national movement once more into the fold of counter revolutionary *bourgeois* leadership of the Congress. The urgent task of Socialism in India to-day is to build up the independent political party of the working class, in despite of the opposition of the British Government, and in despite of the opposition of the *bourgeois* leadership of the National Congress.



## A Letter to the Editor of “The New Age” (\*)

**Muzaffar Ahmad**

To  
The Editor “NEW AGE”.

Dear Sir,

My attention has been drawn to an article in a recent issue of the “Congress Socialist” entitled “The National Executive’s Rejoinder to the Reds” (No. 33). In this article the writer refers to and criticises “an amazing statement on the C.S.P.” which he says emanates from the “REDS”. However the reader fails to find the text of the statement itself in the columns of the “Congress Socialist”. The politically minded public has the “rejoinder” before it but not the original statement. In view of the fundamental importance of the issues raised in the rejoinder, I consider it essential that the public should have the original statement before it. I am herewith supplying you a copy of the same for publication.

The question raised is, “Whither C.S.P.? Will it develop into a mass party of left unity — a powerful lever for the building up the United National Front and an instrument for assisting the growth of a united revolutionary working class party? Or will it degenerate into a sectarian party of Socialists demarcating itself from Marxists and Lefts? The question is brought sharply into the forefront by the recent expulsion and suspensions decided upon by the National Executive of the Congress Socialist Party. As far as I am concerned, I recognise the positive achievements of the C.S.P. That is why I am alarmed and pained at the recent bureaucratic tendency of the

\*On Congress Socialist Party published in “The New Age”, Vol. III. No. 11, April 1934, Page 160.

National Executive of the Party. I have nothing in common with the policy of M.N. Roy, whose attitude towards the C.S.P. is wholly negative — destructive and disruptive. I do not think that the criticism offered in the “Statement” cuts the very basis of the agreement which was arrived at between the Marxists and the C.S.P. Genuine Marxists will always seek to achieve United Front in Action with the C.S.P. on all specific issues. ‘Left Unity’ is the crying need of the hour, in order to counteract the new drift towards conciliation and reformism within the National Congress. Marxists will and must strive to build up this left unity in whatever form it is possible to do it.

Yours Sincerely,  
**(Sd.) Muzaffar Ahmad**

## **The Manifesto of the Anti-Imperialist Conference 1934 (\*)**

The Indian people is groaning under the yoke and exploitation of British Imperialism. Relying upon their political and economic supremacy and squeezing millions of rupees year after year the blood-thirsty imperialists have brought toiling masses of the people to a state of famine, helpless poverty and intolerable slavery. British Imperialism retarded the economic development of the country in every way, supporting and relying upon all that is backward and reactionary in town and country. The crisis in the economic and political life of India is rapidly developing to a mature stage of revolutionary struggle. This is the cause as well as the consequence of intensified economic and extra-economic pressure of British Imperialism on the toiling masses. The primary source of this pressure is the general crisis within the system of World Capitalism as a result of the tremendous growth of fundamental contradictions.

The year 1934 has been marked especially by the growth of militant opposition of the working-class from big wage movement and strikes in the most conservative countries, England and America, to demonstrations and general anti-fascist strikes and clashes with the police in France and Holland and revolutionary uprisings in Austria and Spain. Fascism and reaction continue to advance but the first definite signs are showing of internal decay and narrowing of the social basis of Fascism in Germany. The international situation is increasingly and extremely acute. All the pretence of disarmaments is now giving up, all the great powers

Excerpt from : "Communism in India, Unpublished Documents 1935-1945"

Edited by Subodh Roy.

\* This conference was held in Calcutta.

are openly arming, the diplomatic manoeuvres are proceeding, and outposts are being established in the Central and Eastern Asia for war against the Soviet Union and the Chinese Soviets. Japanese Imperialism has been engaged for some years in open or concealed war in China, Manchuria and Mongolia and from this storm centre or from Europe local or world war is expected to break out at any moment. The situation can only be summed up aptly by saying that all the indications point to a "second round" of wars and revolutions. For the present purposes the important points are that no substantial economic improvement can be expected, acute economic depression and the imminence of war must continue to dominate the policy of Imperialism; and actual war may be expected with confidence within a short time.

2. The crisis within the imperialist framework in India is accompanied by a hastening of the process of class differentiation among the Indian people and the consolidation of the counter-revolutionary forces in defence of the existing apparatus of exploitation and oppression. The crisis unfortunately finds the revolutionary toiling masses in a very weak state of organisation. While, therefore, it is a fact that there is no real and final solution of the present crisis except a revolutionary adjustment of social revolutions, that is to say, so far as the Indian masses are concerned, a revolutionary overthrow of the present bourgeois feudal imperialist State—there is also a real danger that the counter-revolutionary forces that are saddled in power today may succeed in temporary stabilization through a ruthless suppression of the organisations leading the toiling masses to a further spell of intensified slavery, starvation and misery. Therefore, the urgent imperative task that faces all the objectively anti-imperialist elements in India today is to close in their ranks and organise their revolutionary united front under a bold, steadfast and scientific leadership.

3. The foundations of the powers of British Imperialism in India were laid in pre-imperialist epoch of Merchant Capitalism, when the young and adventurous bourgeoisie of the West found it necessary to fortify its coastal strongholds in their country in order to safeguard its semi-piratical trade. The rotten apparatus of feudal

economy prevailing at the time rapidly crumbled before the penetration of the new social and political force. In the meanwhile the industrial revolution in England brought about a corresponding change of the British capital in India. This vast country, with its natural resources and its teeming millions of human population, became transformed into a colony to serve primarily as the cheapest source of raw material for the expanding capitalist industry of Great Britain and the most profitable market for its exports. The whole policy of British Imperialism in India is directed towards the maintenance of the colonial regime, for which purpose British Imperialism has established and extended the extremely thorough apparatus of State power, including a vast standing army equipped with the most modern weapons of warfare. The terrific burden of taxes falls directly on the toiling masses.

4. Against the most majority of the Indian population, which it has subjected to its slavery, British Imperialism seeks for support from the native exploiting classes (princes, landlords, zamindars, merchants and money-lenders), in the rule of the big and small native princes and feudal chieftains and in the pre-capitalist feudal social economy of the village. British Imperialism found ready-made instruments to serve the interests of the colonial regime. It has, therefore, preserved relics of bygone social epoch and is thus directly responsible for preventing the natural and historical developments of the forces of production and of the growth and progress of social economy. While Capitalism has up to a certain point played progressive role in imperialist countries, in the colonies themselves capitalist Imperialism has always helped only the forces of reaction and retrogression.

5. The Indian bourgeoisie also arose primarily out of the needs of British imperialist development in India. The big trading Indian bourgeoisie arose as a link between the Indian masses and the British exporting and importing capitalist interest. On the basis of its accumulated share of the surplus value extracted from the joint exploitation of the Indian masses, a section of this trading Indian bourgeoisie was able to set up independent manufacturing industry mostly in those spheres where it could avoid conflict with British capital (its phenomenal rise in the cotton boom of 1860). But British

Imperialism has specially maintained its policy of preventing the industrialization of India in pursuit of its colonial aims. The Indian bourgeoisie was, therefore, forced to grow only under conditions of economic and political subservience to British Imperialism. This has further been rendered inevitable by the growth of the Indian Proletariat and its organised struggle in defence of its class interests.

6. The counter-revolutionary character of the Indian bourgeoisie can be clearly seen by glancing over the history of their class organisation, viz., the National Congress and by an analysis of their political programme. The most outstanding feature of the programme of the Indian National Congress has been the side-tracking of the revolutionary energies into counter-revolutionary channels.

7. After the break up and rout of the remnants of feudal opposition (1857), British Imperialism was able to pursue unhampered its creed of exploitation of the Indian masses and to steadily tighten its stranglehold over them. The rising Indian bourgeoisie organised itself politically in order to put itself on the basis of friendly alliance with British Imperialism, and to secure concessions from it within the imperialist framework on a basis of joint exploitation of the toiling masses (Sir Henry Cotton, the founder of the Indian National Congress, 1885).

8. The imperialist war put in the Indian bourgeoisie in a position of advantage which was hardly warranted by the pre-war trend of its economic and political development. The needs of war industry forced British Imperialism partially to relax its colonial regime and to help the temporary development of industrialisation of India. Even heavy industry like Tatas was encouraged since it was a war industry. The Indian bourgeoisie thus secured a few economic concessions and also certain insignificant political privileges as a result of the crisis created by the imperialist war. But the price which it paid for these "Gains" was complete co-operation with British Imperialism in pursuing its war aims, and with this view piling up the burden of debts and taxes on the toiling masses of India (war loans etc.) and mobilising the Indian masses as cannon-fodder in defence of imperialist interest (recruiting campaign supported by Gandhi, Tilak etc.). While the Indian

bourgeoisie accumulated its huge super-profits during the war, the young peasantry in millions drawn from every nook and corner of the country poured its blood on every battlefield to cement the imperialist structure, those toilers who remained behind were swept away in still large numbers by famine, epidemic and starvation. This led to the first *gigantic post-war upheaval* of the masses against British Imperialism.

9. The Indian bourgeoisie now adopted new tactics to meet the requirements of the new situation. While the major portion of the bourgeoisie enthusiastically swallow the political and economic crumbs offered by British Imperialism, its more radical wing put itself at the head of the struggle of the masses. This brought about an apparent split within the bourgeois camp (Congress split over Reforms and Non-cooperation—*Amritsar and Nagpur Congresses*). The tactics of the radical bourgeoisie had two objectives, firstly to enlist the support of the masses for bringing further pressure on British Imperialism (which had already begun to withdraw or modify what little concessions it had offered during the war crisis) and secondly to control and guide the mass upheaval with a view to preventing a repetition of Russian Revolution (which had by this time become a fact of history). A programme of “non-cooperation” and an emphatic insistence over “Non-violence” were the two respective forms adopted for these two objectives. But when it was found that these two tactics could not prevent the elemental uprising of the masses against their oppressors, native as well as foreign (Chauri-Chaura, Rai Bareilly, Bombay riots) the “radical” Congress bourgeoisie suddenly liquidated its fake struggle and transformed itself into a “constitutional opposition” (Swaraj Party).

10. The Congress debacle that led to the ebb of the mass upsurge and competitive restoration of British industry after its ruin during the war led to a renewed offensive on the part of British Imperialism which was found to increase its pressure on the toiling masses of India in the epoch of post-war crisis of World Capitalism. A new revolutionary force was now arising in India itself, the proletariat. The most strenuous efforts were made by the Indian bourgeoisie to put itself at the head of the workers’ organisations (formation

of the Indian Trade Union Congress under the leadership of Lajpat Rai, Chaman Lal, Baptista, etc. in 1920). But reformists have no social basis in India, and therefore workers' revolutionary struggles broke out in spite of and over the head of the reformist bourgeois nationalist trade union leadership. Steeled by the experience of these struggles the class-conscious Indian Proletariat has qualified itself for the leadership of the revolution of the toiling masses of India for the overthrow of the existing predatory social system.

11. As the proletarian movement gathered momentum (political strikes against Simon Commission, Bombay Textile Strike) British Imperialism forged new weapons with the help of the bourgeois nationalists (Swarajist Bloc in the Assembly) to suppress it (Trade Disputes Act, 1928). A new Imperialist Commission (Whitely) to put forth shackles on the workers' movement was appointed. The leaders of the militant workers' movement were rounded up and were sent to Meerut for a protracted trial on a very serious charge of conspiracy to wage war against the king. The Congress leaders began to step forth openly as strike-breakers. While Gandhi deliberately isolated the Ahmedabad textile workers from the great struggles of the Bombay comrades (1928-29) and from the movement of the National Trade Union Solidarity (Trade Union Congress), Jamnadas Mehta organised or put himself at the head of rival trade unions (Congress Labour Office, G.I.P. Staff Union) to break the struggles that were being fought under the leadership of the militant unions.

12. In the face of the rising mass movement, the Indian bourgeoisie had to consolidate its ranks, and the result was the All-party Conference and the NEHRU-SAPRU CONSTITUTION adopted at Calcutta jointly with liberals, the landlords and manufacturers, and I.N.C. had produced the Nehru Constitution in which it declared the necessity of preserving the landlords, the Rajahs and money-lenders, remaining a junior partner in the British Empire. The radical petty bourgeois rank and file of the Congress was silenced with a promise that the leadership would begin the revolutionary struggle for complete independence, if "DOMINION STATUS" was not granted within a year. The petty bourgeois masses, lacking a scientific social outlook, failed to



understand that Dominion Status was only consolidation of British Imperialism on a basis of co-partnership with the Indian bourgeoisie. A section of the petty-bourgeoisie, however, was disillusioned about the role of the Congress leadership even at this stage, but further lacking in a scientific appreciation of the forces of revolution and counter-revolution, it broke out into futile activities of individual terrorism (Lahore Conspiracy, Bhagat Singh's Assembly Bomb trial).

13. At Lahore Congress in 1929 the I.N.C. leadership definitely saw mass discontent rising in the country. There was general movement of anti-imperialist masses in India and its most distinguished feature was the mighty discontent among the city petty-bourgeoisie who formed backbone of the Indian National Congress. There was a conspicuous increase in the activities of terrorists and in demonstration of popular sympathy towards them. The treacherous bourgeois leadership aware of its counter-revolutionary interest made definite bid for leadership. The bourgeoisie has a clear field before them. They succeeded in sidetracking the struggle into counter-revolutionary channels and betrayed the masses as soon as they saw the danger of the peasants masses coming to the political arena by the end of 1930 (e.g. BULDHENA Riots, U.P. peasant no-rent campaign).

14. The Lahore decision was immediately followed up by the institution of a system of dictatorship to guarantee the monopoly control of the Congress machine. The demonstrations of the 26th of January (Independence Day) proved the eagerness of the masses for a genuine revolutionary struggle. But the objective of the Congress was only the clever bourgeois demands of compromise and surrender which Gandhi made on "bended knees" in his letter to his friend—the Viceroy.

15. In the meanwhile, the rapidly developing economic crisis had already brought the real driving forces of the revolutionary struggle to the foreground. The G.I.P. workers came out on a general strike against the imperialist administration in defence of their wages and called upon all transport workers to come out on a gigantic political strike in defence of their common interests. The National Congress bourgeoisie immediately put itself at the heart

of the glorious struggle in order to sabotage it. In the orthodox Gandhian manner it went on bending its knees before the imperialist administration to plead for conciliation (CHAMAN LAL, GIRI and RUIKAR deputation to DELHI, Resolution of Congress Working Committee at Ahmedabad supporting conciliation). There was a simultaneous wave of big strike struggles all over the country (Jute Strike in Calcutta, Koller Gold-mine Strike etc.). The Nationalist reformist majority in the Trade Union Congress executive sabotaged the preparation for a political general strike.

16. About the same time broke out the armed struggle of the peasant tribes on the N.W. Frontier against the ruthless military regime of British Imperialism. At the other extreme of the land the youths of Chittagong carried out a successful mass raid on the British armoury to secure the weapons with which they could fight the British Imperialist monster. In every part of the land, shouting Congress slogans, yet objectively repudiating the Gandhian philosophy and tactics of the Congress, the masses rose and came into armed conflict with the agents of imperialist violence (SHOLAPUR, BILASHI, PANVEL etc.). While the Congress carried on sham campaign for the non-violent confiscation of state property (salt depots) and failed to strike even a single-blow in defence of its own property (confiscation by Government of the Congress house etc.). The workers of SHOLAPUR and the peasants of KISHOREGANJ confiscated and burnt the documents which were the symbols of their slavery and resisted their enemies with arms. Imperialism never slackened its repression in 1931 and yet the I.N.C. in the name of Gandhi-Irwin truce went even to the R.T.C. leaving Indian masses and revolutionaries at the tender mercies of British troops and jails (Vallabhaji Patel shamelessly said "Commutation of the death sentences of Bhagat Singh etc. was no part of the truce"). Bullets were flying over the country, prosecutions went on by hundreds but the Congress continued singing the song of truce. When dire misery and poverty of the masses led them to break the barriers to truce, Jawaharlal Nehru in the name of the Congress again stepped in, of course, to lead the peasantry. His first move was to divert the anti-imperialist and

anti-feudal forces of the movement to a few economic demands. While this imperialist Government were openly investing the zaminders with powers for arresting the peasants, the Congress assured the zaminders that the U.P. peasant movement was not directed against the zaminders and that they should not misconstrue the movement for withholding rents."

17. The launching of the Civil Disobedience in 1932 proved to be the repetition of another great betrayal of the Indian masses to British Imperialism. Imperialism launched upon a reign of terror in India. The rising peasant movement in Burmah, U.P., Kashmir, Alwar and other provinces challenging the very basis of imperialist and feudal exploitation was drowned in pools of blood. Revolutionary youths of Bengal and Punjab were summarily sent to gallows. Freedom of speech, association, press was prohibited. In U.P., houses and conveyances were commandeered for imperialist use and troops and armoured cars were marching through towns and villages to terrorise the masses. In short, round-ups, firings, ordinances, curfew orders etc. were the order of the day. Again the I.N.C. led by Gandhi resented the movement for mass Civil Disobedience in 1933 and replaced the struggle against the imperialist by a peaceful reformist activity of improving the caste system, being afraid of the progress of the revolutionary upsurge in the country. That was the path of treachery and the betrayal of people's interests. That was the policy of hiding collaboration behind a wordy "oppositional" chatter.

18. We see that the policy of Gandhism on which the programme of Congress is founded uses the cloak of vague phrases about love, meekness, modesty and hardworking existence, lightening the burden of the peasantry, etc. but under this cloak it preached and preaches, defended and defends the interests of the Indian capitalists, the inevitability and the wisdom of the division of society of rich and poor—eternal inequality and exploitation.

19. The attitude of the Indian National Congress towards the question of violence also betrays its counter-revolutionary role. The propaganda of non-violence of Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders of the National Congress is intended to prevent a general national armed insurrection of the toiling masses against British

rule. (By his own confession in his autobiography Gandhi took part in armed suppression of the Zulu peasants in Africa and assisted British Imperialist robbers in their fight against German capitalists for the right to exploit colonial people. Gandhi recruited Indian peasants into the British army and sent to their deaths hundreds of thousands of Indian workers and peasants in the interest of imperialist robbers. And today Gandhi tells the peasants and workers of India that they have no right to and must not revolt against their exploiters.) While on the one hand it unreservedly condemns all violence on the part of the oppressed and the exploited in the course of their struggle for freedom and points them as if they were an inhuman species that revels in wanton bloodshed which every genuine revolutionary knows it to be false—on the other, it also asks for control over the Indian and British troops in India for the purpose of the exigency of the “internal insurrection” as Gandhi himself said at the 2nd Round-Table Conference. Similarly whenever there is a workers’ strike or peasant rising in India, the valiant Indian National Congress, champions of non-violence, are the first to invoke the aid of British troops to maintain law and order. What other proof is needed to show that Indian National Congress opposes violence on the part of the exploited masses of India only because it knows that a revolutionary uprising in India would wipe out British Imperialism, would not spare Indian Capitalism and landlordism for a single-second.

20. What is the picture of the National bourgeois camp today? At present we see two groups, one which openly and insistently demands the cessation of all “pseudo opposition” and has decided to participate in the Legislative Assembly. Gandhi has not objected to their participation but blessed them. Both the right and left of the Congress are against calling the masses to resist the new Constitution. The feudal-imperialist Constitution launched by British Imperialism aims at strengthening the rule of imperialists while adopting itself to new conditions. By bringing the princes and landlords to a certain limited participation in the Government of the country and conceding some trifling economic concession to the Indian bourgeoisie at the expense of the foreign competitors and toiling masses, British Imperialism is rallying together the

forces of counter-revolution against the people in order to entrench its position. Indian National Congress is opposed to the struggle against the Constitution being turned into a movement of the millions. Experience of the entire history of the Indian National Movement shows that the Indian National Congress is a class organisation of the bourgeoisie connected with the liberal landlords and thus it consistently opposed the anti-imperialist agrarian revolution. The further this revolutionary struggle of the masses advances against Imperialism, the closer and closer becomes the collaboration of the Indian National Congress with Imperialism.

21. We see the appearance of pseudo-oppositional group within the Congress which is hiding behind the left phrases and pseudo-radical criticism of the policy of Indian National Congress. This oppositional group is, as a matter of fact, against the growing mass revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants. Instead of calling on the masses for immediate resistance against the constitution, instead of launching upon the movement of non-payment of taxes, rents and debts, and instead of calling for the preparation of a general strike, it advocates the old policy of subordination of the working-class to the bourgeoisie for maintaining the leading position of the bourgeois Indian National Congress among the toiling masses. It gives the slogan of capturing Congress in order to waste the energies of the rank and file which is rapidly showing revolutionary orientation. It puts forward various socialist slogans but drags at the tail of the bourgeoisie. It is possible to judge of any party or group by its deeds and not by its words.

22. These developments clearly demonstrate that as the revolutionary crisis develops on account of the growing economic pressure on the toiling masses (unemployment, standardisation scheme, fall of the prices) the bourgeoisie want to strengthen its ideological hold over the masses through Congress Socialist Party.

23. It is necessary that the most ruthless fight must be waged against all the subtleties of the Congress and its allies. The changing tactics of the Congress in face of the growth of the revolutionary forces must be clearly exposed to the masses. The Congress must be denounced as an organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie and working in alliance with princes, landlords and zamindars. The

most notorious manoeuvres of the Congress such as localisation of the peasant struggles, sabotaging them, if possible giving them communal colour, refusing to transforming them into political fights and appearing to help them with advice to take up to subsidiary industries as a solution of their poverty must be exposed. Against Congress programme, against Congress ideology and against method of pseudo-fight while putting forward one programme of anti-imperialist United Front. The masses are realising that whatever sham fight the Congress is putting up is only to serve the class interests of the capitalists and landlords. They are now understanding that they cannot overthrow the system of British Imperialism with the weapons of Gandhism, which are the special weapons of Indian bourgeoisie, in order to disorganise and sabotage the mass struggle.

24. But the disillusioned strata of the petty-bourgeoisie have adopted the individual terroristic methods to achieve the goal of independence. The emancipation of India cannot be achieved by individual terrorist acts. The supporters of the terrorist acts in our country do not see and do not believe in the struggle of the broad masses of the people and do not understand the connection between the agrarian revolt, the struggle of the working class and the overthrow of British domination. They try by brave and single-handed terrorist acts to achieve victory over British Imperialism. While recognising the devotion and self-sacrifice of the terrorists in the cause of the national emancipation of India it must be made clear that the road to victory is not the method of individual terror but the struggle and the revolutionary armed insurrection of the widest possible masses of the working class, the peasantry and the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie.

25. The workers, peasants, and the urban petty-bourgeoisie are full of hatred towards the Imperialists. They come in constant conflict with reactionary forces of the old semi-feudal caste society. In conflict with the officials, police, Government, landlords and usurers, while defending their day-to-day interests, the consciousness of the workers and toilers and the determination to organise themselves and to struggle is being roused. In the struggle for the democratic demands, the mass revolutionary movement is

growing, the class-consciousness of the workers is increasing, in the struggle for their interests the toiling masses see in practice the treacherous policy of the national reformists. It is clear to them that in order to obtain independence, land, bread and power, it is essential to throw overboard the Gandhian policy of non-violence and passive resistance which has resulted in the preservation of the interests of the exploiters. The discontent amongst the peasants has reached a high watermark. It suffices to read the newspapers to be convinced that the movement of non-payment of debts, taxes and rent is not slowing down. Throughout the country, the landlords are bringing hundreds of thousands cases to the imperialist court with the demand to collect forcibly their dues from the peasants and drive them from the land. Peasant firms are being sold in auction for a mere trifle. In KASHMIR, ALWAR and other districts the discontent burst out in agrarian revolts. The most distinguished feature of the situation today is the mighty growth of the peasant unrest in India. Never before in the history of India was there such a widespread spontaneous movement of the Indian peasant masses. The uprising in U.P. and other parts, the armed insurrection of the Burmese peasantry are facts which clearly support the above contention. The agrarian areas have already become the theatres of war against British Imperialism and native exploiters. Therefore, never forgetting for a moment that the agrarian situation today is the main crux of the Indian revolution, that the mobilisation of the peasant masses under the proletarian leadership for effective political action is the pre-condition of the Indian revolution to win independence from foreign domination, all immediate steps to establish contact with the peasantry and to bring about an effective linking up of the struggle must be taken up. A most merciless fight should be waged in rural areas against the reformist Congress which is attempting to mobilise its influence among the peasantry through the counter-revolutionary programme of village industries Association.

26. The increasing strikes among the workers, the revolt among the peasants are all signs of the activity of the masses. The revolutionary people are ready to fight. And there remains the only path, the path of systematically preparing, mobilising and

training the masses for national revolution. Its culmination point would be the revolt of all the toiling people for land, food, independence and the workers' and peasants' Government. There is no other path for liberating our great, mighty but enslaved and impoverished country.

27. What social classes are able to carry out this task of National Democratic Revolution ? The working-class (as the only consistent revolutionary class) in alliance with the peasantry (whose land hunger cannot be satisfied except by an agrarian revolution) supported by the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie of the cities. Consequently, no programme can be truly anti-imperialist programme in India if it does not act as a weapon of mobilisation of the workers and peasants (under the leadership of the working-class) for direct mass revolutionary struggle against the existing imperialist system. No matter how radical the demands of the programme may look on paper, if the programme is not based upon the promotion and organisation of the agrarian revolts, if it does not pre-suppose the hegemony of the proletariat in the national revolution, then the programme is a programme of betraying the National Revolution.

28. Therefore, in order to co-ordinate and organise the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle of the workers and peasants and revolutionary youths in all parts of India, it is necessary to establish the ALL-INDIA ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE. It is only through this organisation of the anti-imperialist United Front of the toiling masses and revolutionary youths that the tasks of National Revolution can be carried through.

29. The following are the main tasks of the National Revolution:—

(i) Complete overthrow of the rule of British Imperialism and outstanding it from the key positions which it holds in the economic life of the country, Banks, Railways, Mines, Plantation.

(ii) Abolition of native States and landlordism.

(iii) Land to the peasants and repudiation of all rural debts.

(iv) Radical change in the condition of the working-class; a minimum 8-hour day as transition to 7-hour day; equal pay for equal work; protection to women and young workers;—social insurance, unemployment pay, etc.

(v) Establishment of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic.



30. The immediate organisational measures must include establishment of general strike committees in every factory and shop and revolutionary peasant committees to carry on mass no-tax, no-rent and no-debt campaign in every village; revolutionary student groups in every educational institution; revolutionary groups among the soldiers together with preparation of the masses for active resistance to the forces of counter-revolution on the following main demands:—

(i) Expulsion of British troops, abolition of the police and arming of the working-masses.

(ii) Liberation of all political prisoners.

(iii) Freedom of speech, conscience, press, organisation, meetings, strikes, picketing, etc. and abolition of repressive laws, anti-labour laws etc.

(iv) Equality of all, irrespective of sex, race, creed and caste.

(v) Judges and officials to be appointed by popular vote and to be subject to immediate recall by the majority of the electors.

(vi) 8-hour day; 6-hour day in harmful trades; 4-hour day for young workers.

(vii) Annual holiday of 4 weeks with pay; weekly rest period of at least 36 hours with pay.

(viii) Minimum wage of Rs. 50/-

(ix) Insurance managed by the state against unemployment, sickness, maternity, accident, old-age, industrial diseases, etc.

(x) Abolition of fines and deductions from pay.

(xi) Factory inspection under workers' supervision.

(xii) Direct employment only; abolition of contract system.

(xiii) Improved housing; separate house at low rent for every working-class family.

(xiv) Confiscation without compensation of all land held by landlords, princes, money-lenders and Government and its distribution among working peasants.

(xv) Cancellation of all debts of peasants, artisans and small producers.

(xvi) Nationalisation of the irrigation canal system, and management of peasants committees.

(xvii) Confiscation without compensation of plantations and management by workers' committees.

(xviii) Abolition of indirect taxation, steeply graded income and inheritance taxes.

(xix) Free and compulsory primary education up to 16 years.

31. An essential condition for the successful working out of this revolutionary United Front programme is a ruthless fight against all treacherous attempts to confuse the issues and to create counter-revolutionary illusions among the masses, especially those carried out by the Congress, and more particularly by its Left-wing (Congress Socialists, Royists etc.). The latest slogan of Congress socialists to elect a Constituent Assembly without giving an organised lead to the masses for the conquest of power (following the lead given by the Indian Communist renegade Mr. Roy) is a fresh proof of such attempts and emphasises the necessity for exposing and counteracting them without mercy. In view of the imminence of war, special attention must be directed to propaganda of resistance to war, both before war actually breaks out and after it has begun (by means of strikes in war industries, transport etc.) and for taking advantage of war for revolutionary purposes. To combat the ideological influence of Italian and German fascism, pointing out that the national "emancipation" which is the slogan of these movements has very little in common with the emancipation of a colonial country, and that fascism in India, by fighting against the workers' movement would be fighting against national emancipation on behalf of British Imperialism.

32. The All-India Anti-Imperialist League must, of course, seek organisational unity with the *WORLD LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM* because Imperialism is an international phenomenon and must be fought in an international scale. In spite of inter-imperialist rivalry, the United Front of World Imperialism against all anti-imperialist forces is a fact. Our answer to this must be the international United Front of all anti-imperialist elements.

33. The Soviet Union, which is organised outside and in antagonism to the world imperialist system, the proletarian in every

capitalist country, and the toiling masses of the colonies form the main world forces of the Anti-Imperialist struggle. It is a fundamental task of the All-India Anti-Imperialist League to fight for the united solidarity of all these forces.

Provisional Committee  
ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE

Calcutta.

## Fascism And Empire\*

Rajani Palme Dutt

Fascism is revealed today as the more and more dominant policy of capitalism in crisis all over the world.

Fascism means the rule of the most violent, chauvinist elements of imperialism, throwing aside all democratic pretences, and using every device of terrorist dictatorship to smash the revolt of the working class and of the colonial peoples.

In its initial development Fascism appears as a phenomenon above all of the big imperialist countries, arising in the metropolitan centres of finance-capital to crush the rising working class movement which threatens its power. In order to achieve this task Fascism has to resort to demagoguery so as to delude the petit-bourgeois masses and backward strata of the workers into doing its work. For this purpose Fascism puts on a "national" mask. "Britain First", "Germany First", "Italy First" is the slogan of Fascism. "National self-sufficiency", "autarchy", "economic isolation" of each "nation" within its own barriers is declared to be the only path to solve the economic crisis.

But this "national" cover is only a lie to deceive the innocent. Fascism is in reality the weapon and policy of monopoly capital, that is, of imperialism, of the Thyssens and Krupps, of the Deterdings and Rothermeres, of the Monds and the Fords, of the Wall Street and the city and the German Steel Trust and the *Comite des Forges*. Monopoly capital *cannot* find scope for the

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gigantic modern forces of production within the national frontiers; this is only a fantasy of propaganda. It must constantly seek to extend its rule. It organises the intensified dictatorship of the big trusts within each national unit only in order to fight more effectively on the world scale, for the world market, for world domination, for new spheres of influence, *to extend the monopolist area of exploitation throughout the world*, to war with other Powers for the maintenance of existing spoils or the conquest of new spoils.

*Fascism is thus the weapon, not of "national self-sufficiency," as it pretends, but of world-power, of extended and intensified colonial domination and exploitation.*

### **Aggression and Expansion**

More territory! New spheres of world influence! This is the real war-cry of Fascism.

The future of Italy, proclaims Mussolini, lies in Asia and Africa. Italy must extend its rule over the Near East and Northern Africa.

Germany, cry the Nazis, must win back its lost colonies, and must also win new subject territory in Eastern Europe. "Today Germany" complains Hitler in his "Mein Kampf." "is not a World Power. From a purely territorial point of view the area of the German Reich is insignificant compared with those of the so-called World Powers"—i.e. the British Empire, French Empire, American Empire, etc. "The National Socialist Movement must attempt to remove the disproportion between our population and our area."

The Japanese Militarist-Fascist dictatorship of Araki and his colleagues, who proclaim their admiration of German National Socialism as their model, combines terrorists methods at home with unlimited aggression and expansion policies through the Far East.

British Fascism, voiced by the Rothermeres and Mosleys, and, in another form, by the Churchills, Lloyds and Beaverbrooks, calls for the "strong hand" to maintain colonial domination. Away with the "weakness" of Baldwin and MacDonald! Away with

"concessions" and constitutional pretences. Ruthless repression is their watchword.

The colonial rule of the finance-capitalist oligarchies, centred in Europe, the United States and Japan, is tottering. The colonial peoples are rising in ever renewed and stronger waves of assault to win their freedom. Therefore the policy of imperialism turns to ever more repressive measures.

## **Absolutism**

In the first stage after the war the attempt was made to meet the rising revolt of the colonial peoples, not only with bloody repression but at the same time with a "liberal" show of "concessions," with lying promises of "self-government" in the vague future, with "democratic" talk and caricatures of "constitutions". All this humbug, however, failed to stem the revolt, failed to win more than a section of the national bourgeoisie in each country. The oppressed and hungering masses, who could not live on a diet of formulas and White Papers, went forward with their struggle against the unchanged dictatorship.

To-day all this "liberal" talk is more and more thrown on one side. The previous promises are denied or interpreted away. The policy moves steadily to the right. The latest "Constitutional Reforms" under discussion for India drop the last shreds of "democratic" pretences, proclaim openly the absolutism of the Viceroy and the Governors in every sphere, and seek to draw in the most reactionary feudal forces, the ruling princes, to buttress the whole structure.

The British Empire in its present stage of extreme decay affords the most instructive study of the increasing tendency towards Fascism as the final policy of the ruling White bourgeoisie.

The Ottawa Conference represented the attempt of the British bourgeoisie and of the subordinate semi-independent bourgeoisies in the Dominions to overcome the growing disintegration and draw closer the bonds by a series of economic measures.

But the Ottawa measures have failed to produce any important result. Between 1931 and 1933 British exports to the Empire have fallen by £7 millions, while British imports from the Empire have risen by £2 millions. Between 1932 (the year of Ottawa) and 1933 British exports to the Empire fell by £2 millions, at the same time as British exports to non-Empire countries rose by £4½ millions, while British imports from the Empire rose by £1.3 millions. These changes are in any case minute and are solely at the expense of Britain. The Dominions bourgeoisies have taken advantage of Britains wooing to increase their hold on the British market, while their nominal "concessions" in exchange have only resulted in falling British exports to their market. Ottawa, in short, has only meant that Britain has paid blackmail to keep some hold on the disintegrating Dominions, but has reached no solution of the economic problem or problem of disintegration.

Stronger measures require to be adopted if the weakening British hold is to be maintained. And here again Fascism comes to the front, not only within Britain, but in the attempt to stimulate subordinate Fascist movements in the Dominions.

### **Fascist Movements**

The fight against Ireland is maintained on the lines of economic war, and at the same time the Blue shirt movement is developed under General O'Duffy and Cosgrave with British encouragement and support to prepare the fighting force for the subjugation of Ireland "with the maximum economy of British lives".

Newfoundland is transformed at a stroke from a Dominion into a subject colony under the dictatorship of a British Governing Commission.

In Australia the New Guard is organised under Colonel Eric Campbell to conduct the fight against the working class and maintain the control of the combined British and Australian capitalist-class.

A similar New Guard has also been organised in New Zealand and in South Africa. These movements are all organised together in the "New Empire Union".

In South Africa the formerly opposed British and Dutch bourgeois parties, the South Africa Party of Smuts and the Nationalist Party of Herzog, draw together in ever closer coalition against the enslaved African five-sixths majority of the population of the South African Union.

At the same time pressure on India and the Crown Colonies is increased. Not only does the British Government policy on India as indicated, move steadily to the right, but the demand of right-wing Conservatism becomes ever more clamorous for the dropping of all "constitutional" shams and pretences and an unlimited policy of the Iron Heel in India. This becomes the test issue of Diehardism in Britain in the present period; and its vote in the National Conference of Conservative Associations rises from below one-third in 1933 to over two-fifths at the Conference held in March, 1934.

"India must remain within the Empire"; every attempt at liberation must be "ruthlessly suppressed," writes Mosley in "Greater Britain." All the "national" pretences of Fascism here disappear from view. "The Indian market" writes the "Blackshirt" is "vital" to Britain; "this is the fundamental economic reason why British rule in India must be maintained." The Lancashire textile manufacturers, viewing their weakening hold in India, move to the support of Fascism; one of their leading representatives writes in the "Oldham Chronicle" (17.2.34): "Is there any wonder that the youth of this country, tired of procrastination, sick at heart and with no hope of improvement or employment, are turning in ever increasing numbers to the more virile policy of Sir Oswald Mosley and the creed of 'Britain First'?"

Fascism represents the supreme violent attempt to maintain a hold by every means of terrorism against both the working class in the imperialist countries and the exploited masses in the colonial countries. The struggle is being drawn together more closely than ever before. The privileged condition of the working masses in the imperialist countries is passing away. The conditions of the struggle, against ever more violent and lawless terrorism, which can only be overthrown in revolutionary battle,



are approximating closer throughout the world. Therefore the unity of the struggle grows. The united struggle will defeat the last furies of dying capitalism, will overthrow both Fascism and colonial domination. In the development of this combined struggle the League against Imperialism has a large and increasing role to play, and confidently calls for the support of all working class organisations and of all national revolutionary anti-imperialists movements. We are approaching the most critical stage of a world struggle for liberation against enslavement, war and destruction.

## Lessons of the Central Textile Workers' Strike in India (\*)

**Ben. Bradley**

*[The following article is of utmost importance in view of the fact that the All India Trade Union Congress appointed a Committee to enquire into the causes that led to the split in the Strike Committee and the Girni Kangar Union during the Textile Workers' General Strike last year. The Committee has since issued a lengthy report on what it considers to be the causes. The Communists are blamed for the split and the failure of the Strike, but these conclusions are ex-parte. The Communists of course were not called upon to defend themselves, or give evidence. There is no reference in the Report to Government repression or the tactics of the Mill Owners.]*

*This article is a reply to the statements of the Committee of Enquiry. In it we are not concerned with the split within the ranks of the National Reformist Trade Union, what we are concerned about is the splitting of the United Front of the Workers during the strike. The article critically analyses the history of the General Strike, the reasons for the split in the United Front of the strikers and the causes of the failure. The criticism is objective and the lessons drawn for the future application of the United Front tactic of the Workers are important.--(Ed.)]*

British imperialism, "granting" India a slave constitution, aims to further reinforce its imperialist domination of the country, to still

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more enslave the Indian people. Whilst giving the princes and land owners the chance to take a limited part in ruling the country and giving some economic concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie, British imperialism actually aims to unite on the basis of this constitution all counter-revolutionary forces in the country for the struggle against the growing forces of the revolution, for an extensive offensive against the working class and toiling masses. And facts really show that the Indian bourgeoisie and its political organisation the National Congress, having abolished the movement of civil disobedience and agreed to take part in the labours of the legislation bodies, transfers more and more openly, adapting itself to the new constitution, to collaboration with British imperialism, comes out ever more consistently against the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle of the national masses. Preaching non-violence, coming out against the class struggle and for class conciliation, fighting against strikes and peasant manifestations, really supporting all new anti-labour laws (providing for the prohibition of the Communist Party, for government arbitration), the National Congress hopes to relieve the force of British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie and land owners for their offensive against the working class and toiling masses, hopes to help British imperialism suppress and disrupt the movement of the masses—to pave the way for the growing domination of British imperialism in India.

However, despite the united efforts of the United Front of British imperialism and the counter-revolutionary forces in the country, the toiling masses in town and village come forward more and more determinedly along the path of struggle against imperialism, against the attacks of capital. And, indeed, one of the most vivid manifestations of the growing resistance and revolutionary activity of the masses against the capitalist offensive, one of the most characteristic signs of the growing role of the working class in the national struggle against imperialist oppression, was the general strike of 120,000 Indian textile workers, which ended in the middle of 1934.

## **Militant United Front**

The textile workers' general strike had been prepared by the whole course of events throughout 1933. The attacks of the capitalist upon the poverty-stricken colonial living standards of the Indian textile workers took on in 1933 unprecedented dimensions and barbarian forms. During only one year over 100,000 textile workers were thrown out of their jobs in the biggest cities of India, out of whom 75,000 lost their jobs in Bombay alone. Wages were cut by 25-50%, while at some mills in Bombay by as much as 80%. Simultaneously, by means of various rationalisation measures (weavers shifted from 2 to 6 looms, etc.), the intensification of labour of the workers was raised in Bombay throughout the year by as much as 300%. In result of the fierce attacks, which during 1933 practically acquired a universal character, the textile workers were thrown back to the pre-war level and deprived of all gains won by them during the course of their obdurate struggles waged for the last 20 years.

The widespread capitalist offensive, leaning for support on the police forces of British imperialism, called forth strong resistance from the workers. Throughout 1933 a partial strike wave spread over many centres, reaching even some of the most distant corners of the land. As these partial strikes progressed, serving to harden the workers and enriching them with fighting experiences, the idea of united resistance grew ever stronger in the minds of the masses. The masses of textile workers had recourse to the general strike, as a more effective weapon in the struggle against the general capitalist offensive, against the terror of the imperialist government. And the more desperate the employers' offensive was, the more mercilessly the imperialist satraps tried to suppress the workers' resistance and prevent the strike from being declared, the greater was the force with which the masses rose for action.

The textile workers' general strike in India was vigorous reply of the working class to the attacks of the employers and State. The broad working masses of Bombay, Sholapur, Nagpur, Kurla and Delhi, Mussulmans and Hindoos, employed and unemployed, organised and unorganised, members of the reformist and

revolutionary unions-all came out in closed ranks to fight, to demonstrate their great will to establish the militant united front, to demonstrate their growing class solidarity. It was precisely under the tremendous pressure brought to bear by the masses that the national reformist trade union leaders had to concede to the revolutionary unions and set up the united front for declaring the general strike.

### **Waging the Struggle**

The strike simultaneously showed that the workers are more and more anxious to have recourse to revolutionary methods of struggle, and that the Gandhist calls for non-violence, for passive resistance, in the spirit of which the National Congress has tried for so many years to "bring up" the workers, meets to-day with less and less sympathy in the midst of the working masses. The Bombay textile workers did not helplessly retreat before the bamboo canes and gun-shots of the police forces, they did not lie down in submissive despair under the wheels of the armoured cars and hoofs of the police horses, they did not hide in their homes and obediently fulfil the orders of the government prohibiting meetings and demonstrations. The striking textile workers, in a desperate struggle, in daily clashes with the armed-to-the-teeth police, forced all to recognise their right to the street, their right to strike. Indeed, no strike in India was ever so sharp, was of such a militant revolutionary character as the general strike of the textile workers of last year. Daily street collisions and clashes with the police often acquiring the nature of a real partisan war, an energetic struggle against strikebreakers, militant meetings and demonstrations, breaking through the police cordons, etc.,—all of these are vivid signs of the sharpening of the class struggle in India.

A characteristic feature of the strike is its organisation and the active part taken by the workers in leading the strike. The creating of a strike committee of 115 persons, mostly representatives of the workers, bringing forth in the course of the struggles new organisational form of leading the strike, in the way of Chowls Committees (fighting committees in the workers' homes), which

eventually played an important part in the strike, mass picketing of the mills, daily meetings and demonstrations—all of these bear witness to the fact that the working masses more and more realise the importance of *waging the struggle in an organised fashion*, that they themselves are beginning more energetically and actively to take part in preparing and leading the struggle, that they are beginning to promote their leaders from their own midst.

## **Political Character**

The striking workers came out to fight not only for their own economic demands, not only against dismissals and wage cuts, but also against imperialist oppression and the lawlessness on the workers and toiling masses. The striking workers, along with putting up their economic demands for the withdrawal of wage cuts, for the reinstatement of the dismissed, etc. *PUT UP ALSO POLITICAL DEMANDS: FOR THE ABOLITION OF ALL REPRESSIVE AND ANTI-LABOUR LAWS, FOR TRADE UNION LEGISLATION, FOR THE LIBERATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS*, etc. This lent the strike from the very outset powerful swing and a political character, which stood out more and more boldly as the strike developed, as the workers came up against the apparatus of violence of the imperialist State. The workers along with this warded off the attempts of the National Congress and Gandhi to interfere in the strike, as well as the attempts of the reactionary trade union leaders Joshi and Bakhale, and showed their great confidence in the revolutionary trade union movement, which in the course of the struggle won the leading role. This clearly shows the growth of the political activity and consciousness of the workers, the rapid revolutionisation of the workers' struggle.

And, nevertheless, in spite of the determination and heroism manifested by the strikers, in spite of the firmness of the strikers and their great desire for the united front, *THE STRIKE WAS BROKEN*, and the workers' demands not granted. *The defeat of the strike is the direct result of the united efforts of the imperialist State, the textile manufacturers, the reactionary trade union leaders, Joshi and Bakhale, the result of the treacherous*

*capitulation of the National Congress and Gandhi and the agency of the Indian bourgeoisie in the ranks of the Labour movement—the “Left” National reformist leaders of the Batatavala Building Girni Kamgar Union, Kandalkar, Alve, Patil, Kara, Shetti & Co.*

## **Government Repression**

In order to disrupt the strike the imperialist government mobilised all of its resources. Having justified, through the conclusions of the investigation of the Bombay “Labour Office,” the mass dismissals and wage cuts carried out by the employers, which served as a direct occasion for the strike, the Government began to fiercely repress the workers’ strike action. During the strike, terror took on unheard-of dimensions. All meetings and demonstrations were prohibited, emergency decrees were applied with regard to the strikers, the strike was declared to be unlawful, strikers were shot down on the streets, strike leaders were daily thrown into prison, picketing was prohibited, etc.—all of these methods were adopted in order to suppress the strike.

The employers, having in their warehouses vast reserves of manufactured goods, accumulated during the crisis, and fully realising that the material success of the strike would inevitably lead to strengthening the influence of the revolutionary wing, basing themselves on the conclusions of the “Labour Office” investigation and leaning for support on the violence apparatus of the Government, took an irreconcilable position with regard to the strikers’ demands. They planned to defeat the strikers by starvation. They even categorically refused to examine the strikers’ demands. They tried to operate the mills with the aid of blacklegs, developing a recruiting drive chiefly among the most exhausted sections of the workers—among the unemployed. With the aid of demagogic leaflets, spread in great numbers among the strikers by automobiles and even aeroplanes, giving the workers many good promises, they hoped to disrupt the united militant front of the strikers. Not limiting themselves to police terror, they also tried to terrorise the workers by means of the “blue pickets” recruits from among the Pathans, jobbers and gangsters.

### **Role of the Congress**

The National Congress and Gandhi, guarding the interests of the Indian textile manufacturers and alarmed at the "threat to the prosperity of the national industry of India," made haste to stretch out a helping hand to the capitalists and the government. They did everything in their power to disorganise the ranks of the strikers, to disrupt the workers' struggle, screening their treacherous policy with the fake "well-wishing" attitude towards the strikers and simultaneously doing their level best to preserve their influence over the working class, which had become extremely shaky as a result of the treacherous, capitulationist policy of the National Congress. The bourgeois-nationalist press and Congressites, trying to convince the strikers that the strike was premature, that the "leaders had poorly advised the workers when they called on them to strike", really urged the workers to obediently submit to the offensive of the capitalists and government. While the government and employers were shooting down the workers, dissolving their meetings and demonstrations, they called on the workers "to on no account permit any violence", thus hoping to disarm the workers and ease the task of the government and manufacturers to suppress the strike. They tried to sweep aside the strike committee elected by the workers and to themselves take over the leadership of the strike, with the sole aim to afterwards behead it, by undertaking behind the backs of the strike committee, to whom the workers had entrusted the leadership of the strike, negotiations with the employers and calling on the workers to stop the struggle. Gandhi himself rushed to help the capitalists in Bombay, trying to force his mediation on them and compel them to stop the strike. The National Congress, understanding quite well the degree to which the general strike is important for rousing the more backward sections of the working class for the struggle against the capitalist offensive, for further developing the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle, and for re-inforcing the leading role of the working class in this struggle, and fearing mostly the transfer of the leadership of the general national movement to the hands of the working class made special efforts to deprive the strike of all political content, to limit the



workers' struggle to a narrow economic framework, to narrow the scope and swing of the strike. The Congressites (Nariman, and others), speaking at workers' meetings, all declared that "the workers only want bread", that "they do not mean to abolish capitalism", that "the dreaming of red flags was mere rubbish and nonsense".

## **Disrupters**

In order to disrupt the strike the government and manufacturers also had recourse to the tried help of the agents of imperialism in the workers' ranks; Joshi, Bakhale and their followers. Although Joshi and Bakhale, as a result of their open treacherous policy, practically lost all influence over the masses and had a very insignificant base among the textile workers, they yet did a lot for disrupting and suppressing the strike. Joshi and Bakhale came out openly against the strike and demanded in the interests of the employers to hand the conflict over for settlement to government arbitration even before the strike had been declared. But when, despite and against their efforts, the strike was declared, and when the workers' struggle acquired an exclusively acute revolutionary character, they tried, leaning for support on the "left" national reformists in the strike committee (Kandalkar, Alve & Co.) and making a number of proposals to the strike committee, which could have made it easier for them to betray the strike, to enter the strike committee, for the sole purpose of disrupting the struggle from within and disorganising the ranks of the strikers. However, the working masses, who well remembered how Joshi and Bakhale had broken the strike of the Bombay textile workers in 1929, how they had helped the government break more than one partial strike, and how they had openly fought against the declaration of the general strike of the textile workers, would not permit Joshi and Bakhale, to get into the leading organs of the strike. Thereupon Joshi and Bakhale, on the orders of their bosses and setting up contacts with the "left" national reformist leaders of the Batatavala Girni Kamgar Union, Kandalkar and Alve, split the strike committee, thus helping to disrupt the strike. Simultaneously, Joshi and Bakhale openly urged the government

to do justice to the strikers, calling on it to "guard peace and order". As Shiva Rao, one of Joshi's adherents, blabbed out, they fully supported the tactic of the government and the employers to suppress the strike at all cost, to refuse to make any concessions whatsoever to the workers, not without any good reason, believing that even a partial victory of the strikers could strengthen the position of the revolutionary wing, and that "consolidation of the position of the revolutionary wing in result of the success of the strike represents a much greater danger than prospects for the further continuation of the strike." (Article of Shiva Rao "Hindoo", May 12th, 1934).

### **United Front Split**

However, despite the terror of the government and the employers, despite the treacherous disrupting activities of the National Congress, Gandhi and the reactionary trade union leaders, Joshi and Bakhale, in spite of the starvation that began to set in among the strikers, the workers continued to stand solid. The final blow was dealt at the strike by the traitors from within—by the leaders of the national reformist Gimi Kamgar Union; Kandalkar, Alve and the Roy adherents. The moment that defined the turn in the struggle and beginning of the decline of the strike was precisely the disruption of the united front (split of the strike committee), by the treacherous leaders of the Batatavala Gimi Kamgar Union, which merely supplemented the united efforts of the government, the employers, the National Congress and Joshi and Bakhale to suppress the strike. The "Left" national reformist trade union leaders of the Batatavala Gimi Kamgar Union and other reformist unions were compelled, before the strike broke out due to the pressure brought to bear by the masses and under the threat to lose their positions among the workers, to agree to the united front with the revolutionary unions and to the declaration of the strike, only for the purpose of knifing the workers in the back when the decisive moment comes. But when the strike, despite the bad forebodings of the National Congress and Joshi, successfully entered the second month, when the workers' struggle began to acquire a more and more acute

character, and when the united strike committee called on all workers of Bombay to support the textile workers by declaring a solidarity strike, Kandalkar, Alve and Co. frightened at the sharpening of the struggle and the growing influence of the revolutionary wing in the strike committee, split the strike committee and organised their own parallel strike committee. The formal pretext for splitting the united strike committee was given by the reformist leaders of the Batatavala Girni Kamgar Union as the refusal of the strike Committee to accept in its ranks the reactionary trade union leaders, Joshi and Bakhale, with whom Kandalkar and Alve had set up the united front for waging a joint struggle against the revolutionary wing and disrupting the strike, for getting Kandalkar and Alve out of the strike committee. The split of the strike committee by Kandalkar, Alve & Co. served as a most serious blow at the united front of the strikers, which had been forced in the course of the struggle, and which had lent it such powerful scope and swing. The split could not but distract the strike committee from the leadership of the strike, could not but disorganise the strikers' ranks and could not but influence the further progress of the strike, which was being waged in conditions of fierce terror and starvation which had set in among the strikers. The split of the united strike committee, effected by Kandalkar and Alve, was later even deepened by the renegade Roy group, which also withdrew from the strike committee.

Hence, this is how the heroic strike of the Indian textile workers was broken. What lessons can be drawn from this strike and from the experience of struggle won by the fighting workers?

### **Vast Political Significance**

The general textile workers' strike quite vividly showed up the co-relation of class forces in the country and marked the watershed between the struggling camps. The strike showed the close contacts existing between British imperialism and the Indian textile manufacturers, who came out in the united front against the struggling workers. The strike showed the real class face of the treacherous National Congress, which strained maximum efforts to disrupt the struggle of the workers in the

interests of the textile bosses. The strike showed up the treacherous role of the reactionary trade union leaders, Joshi and Bakhale, and also the role of the "left" national reformists and Roy adherents, Kandalkar, Alve & Co., who by means of their anti-labour splitting policy during the strike rendered such invaluable services to British imperialism and Indian Textile capital. And no matter how hard the National Congress' and Gandhi, Joshi and Bakhale, the "left" national reformists, including the Roy adherents, tried to screen their treacherous doings, no matter what "well-wishers" of the workers they might have pretended to be, they could not conceal their real face, they could not but show their real essence, they could not but expose themselves in one way or another before the working masses. And it must be said, that many of them withdrew from the strike committee not only not gaining any political credit for themselves, but on the contrary, losing much of what they had had. And herein lies the vast political significance of the strike .

At the same time the strike plainly and convincingly showed the aspiration of the working masses for the united front and class unity in the struggle against the capitalist offensive, against imperialist oppression and for the establishment of the rule of the workers and toiling masses.

*This aspiration for the united front in the struggle, covering at the present time the broad strata of workers, even the most backward of them, is a sign of the times, characterising a new feature of the workers' struggle. It bears witness to vast revolutionary headway made at the present time in the ranks of the working masses, which marks a new stage in the economic and anti-imperialist struggle of the working class.*

## **United Front Tactics**

This strike showed that the will of the working masses to establish the united front is followed and interlaced to ever-greater degrees with the determined transfer of the masses to revolutionary methods of action. During the strike both the National Congress, the agents of imperialism as well as all Kandalkars and Roys, kept on repeating to the workers; "By no

means must you permit violence", "violence is alien to the Indian spirit". "Only by applying Gandhist methods of non-violence will you be able to win". However, ever-greater sections of the working masses are beginning to leave the age when they obediently listened to those treacherous calls, when they, with the name of Gandhi on their lips, turned their backs to the blows of the police truncheons. They are beginning to understand that the sermon of non-violence, screened with pseudo views of morals and the "specific Indian spirit", actually aims to disarm the workers in face of the armed enemy, that by means of non-violence they will never be able to win. The working masses are now beginning to wage a more and more determined struggle against the government and employers by means of active revolutionary militant methods, they are beginning to raise new organisational forms of action (Chowls Committees), to take active part in the leadership of the struggle. In a most obdurate struggle they confirm their right to the street, to strike. This transfer of the workers to revolutionary methods of struggle, which is a characteristic feature of a number of recent strikes, could particularly be seen in the textile workers' general strike. Hence, the growing desire of the workers for revolutionary leadership, which explains the growing influence of the revolutionary wing during the recent period, especially during the general strike. Hence, the great perspectives and objective possibilities opening before the revolutionary wing to-day in the struggle for the masses, in the struggle for the majority of the working class on the basis of systematically applying the tactic of the united front and realising trade union unity on the basis of the class struggle.

Along with the aspiration of the working masses for the united front, along with the growing transfer of the working class to revolutionary methods of struggle, the political activity and consciousness of the working class rapidly grows. All of these are integral parts of one and the same process—the rapid revolutionisation of the working class, turning it from a class for others into a class for itself. This growing political activity also stood out particularly boldly during the recent strike. The textile

workers' general strike is, as a matter of fact, the most vividly expressed political strike in recent years, both from the angle of how it progressed, as well as from the angle of its consequences. The general strike showed that the working class is crystallising more and more as an independent political force, that it comes more and more to the fore as leader of the general national struggle against imperialism and the counter-revolutionary forces inside the country. The general strike is not only a phase in the struggle of the working class against the capitalist offensive. Its significance goes far beyond this. It served as a powerful blow by the working class at the united counter revolutionary front of British Imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, directed to suppress the rapidly growing revolutionary forces in the country. It serves as a very vivid sign of the deepening revolutionary upsurge. And there is no doubt whatever that the textile workers' general strike, just as the strikes of 1928 and 1929 will inevitably serve as an impetus for a fresh outburst of the anti-imperialist and revolutionary agrarian struggle.

Finally, the strike showed the degree to which the adherents of the revolutionary trade union movement in India have reorganised their ranks and sharpened their tactics for leading the struggle of the working class in new conditions, for a successful struggle for winning over the majority of the working class in face of the impending fresh battles against the growing offensive of capital, against imperialist oppression. And the strike showed, that the revolutionary wing can record considerable gains in the field of preparing and leading the struggles of the working class.

### **Revolutionary Wing in Action**

It was precisely the adherents of the revolutionary wing, who seeing the mood of the masses, timely raised the slogan for a textile workers' general strike, mobilising under this slogan the masses for the struggle against the capitalist offensive and imperialist oppression, and exposing the sabotage of the reformist leaders. The adherents of the revolutionary wing, fighting for the *declaration of a general strike, for the extension of the united front of the workers in the struggle, signed an agreement about joint*

action with the national reformist unions, which played an important part in mobilising the broad masses for the struggle and facilitated the rallying of members of the reformist unions to the struggle as well as those strata of unorganised workers who still nourished illusions about the leadership of the reformist unions. The adherents of the revolutionary wing, leaning on the masses for support and on the basis of correctly applying the tactic of the united front, undermined the sabotage of the reformist leaders and forced the declaration of a general strike not only in Bombay but also in other cities, including also in Nagpur and even at a number of mills in Ahmedabad, where the influence of the Gandhists is still strong. Fighting as the strike progressed for consolidating the united front of the workers and for isolating the reformist leaders, the adherents of the revolutionary wing found it possible to supplement the central strike committee in Bombay with representatives from the mills and supported the initiative of the masses for the creation of Chawls Committees which served to strengthen the front of the strikers and hampered the machinations of the reformists to disrupt the strike. The adherents of the revolutionary wing waged the strike by means of mass methods (daily meetings, demonstrations, etc.) which encouraged the militant mood of the strikers and facilitated the sharpening of the forms of action. The adherents of the revolutionary wing, fighting to widen the strike, called on all workers of Bombay on May 23rd, *i.e.*, on the expiration of one month since the beginning of the strike, to declare a general solidarity strike. The adherents of the revolutionary wing, exposed before the broad masses the treacherous character of the National Congress and the manoeuvres of the reformists, beginning with Joshi and ending with Kandalkar and Roy, all aiming to disrupt the workers' struggle. Finally, the adherents of the revolutionary wing stopped the strike in an organised fashion, when as a result of the fierce repressions undertaken by the Government and manufacturers, when as a result of the starvation that had set in among the strikers and when as a result of the splitting policy of the treacherous leaders of the *Batavala Girni Kamgar Union*, the strike wave began to subside and the strikers *en masses* began to

return to their jobs. As a result of the effective application of the tactic of the united front the adherents of the revolutionary wing found it possible to undermine to a considerable degree the influence of the reformists and strengthen its own positions, taking over as a matter of fact the leading role in the strike. This reinforced the front of the struggling workers and should have made for the success of the workers, struggle in its early stage.

### **Weaknesses and Mistakes**

However, while stressing these achievements, it is necessary also to note that the adherents of the revolutionary wing manifested during the strike a number of weaknesses and made a number of serious mistakes which could not but hamper the struggle of the revolutionary wing for winning over the masses, for mobilising the working class for a victorious struggle against the capitalist offensive. These mistakes, which came clearly to the fore during the final stages of the strike, chiefly consist of the inability to consistently put the tactic of the united front into effect for the struggle for the masses, of sectarian traditions in practically applying the tactic of the united front, of the inability to fight against the provocative splits of the reformist traitors.

An illustration of this is the tactic of the revolutionary wing in connection with the proposal of Kandalkar and Alve to include Joshi and Bakhale in the strike committee. True, Joshi and Bakhale fought with all their might against the strike. It is also true that Kandalkar and Alve wanted to include Joshi and Bakhale into the strike committee for the purpose of finally disrupting the general strike. However, from the point of view of strengthening the united front of the fighters and isolating Joshi and Bakhale from the masses it would have been much more expedient, in reply to the proposal to include Joshi and Bakhale in the strike committee, to write to the rank and file members of the Joshi union and propose to them to elect workers' representatives to the strike committee and explain to them the reason for this. Such a tactic, while serving to isolate Joshi and Bakhale from the masses, would have simultaneously rendered it more difficult for the reformists to carry through their splitting policy.



It was even an ever bigger mistake to expel Kandalkar and Alve from the strike committee, precisely because they proposed to include Joshi and Bakhale in the strike committee. The expulsion of Kandalkar and Alve assisted in their work of splitting the strike committee and disrupting the struggle of the textile workers. The revolutionary wing could have much more successfully paralysed the treacherous doings of Kandalkar and Alve if it had waged a struggle not for expelling Kandalkar and Alve from the strike committee, but if it had waged an energetic drive among the masses for exposing them, if the revolutionary wing had explained to the masses, especially to the members of the Kandalkar union, still following in the footsteps of Kandalkar, that Kandalkar and Alve were trying to find all ways and means for splitting the united front, if it had called on the masses to ward off all machinations of Kandalkar and Alve in their efforts to split the strike committee and undermine the workers' struggle, it would have become possible to isolate them from the masses, and while not giving them any formal pretext for a split would have in reality rendered the strike committee safe from their treacherous machinations.

Finally, some of the adherents of the revolutionary wing in the final composition of the strike committee made a very bad mistake by defending and carrying through a resolution, reproaching the national reformist Girmi Kamgar Union AS A WHOLE about Kandalkar and Alve having split the strike committee. This resolution might be utilised by the reformists (it has already been utilised by the Roy adherents), for accusing the followers of the revolutionary wing of confusing the rank-and-file membership masses with the leaders of the reformist unions. There can be no doubt that the revolutionary wing as a whole is quite far from believing that there is no difference between the honest workers, for the time being deceived and misled by the reformist leaders, and the leaders of the reformist unions. The wrong formulation of the resolution cannot but hamper the struggle of the revolutionary wing for winning over the masses for wresting them from under the influence of the reformists, cannot but create the danger for

the adherents of the revolutionary wing of isolation from the masses.

### **Intensify Struggle for United Front**

These mistakes bear witness to the fact that some adherents of the revolutionary wing have still not freed themselves from sectarian traditions in their practical work, and that these mistakes still greatly hinder the struggle of the revolutionary wing for the masses, that they made easy the work of the reformists of carrying on their treacherous splitting activity. These sectarian mistakes held root in bowing before the spontaneous pressure of the masses, in the wrong tactic that this spontaneous pressure of the masses will in itself, without any day-to-day petty work for organising the struggle of the masses, for taking advantage of the growing discontent of the workers with the reformist leaders, be able to sweep aside all obstacles on its way.

These broadly speaking are the results of the textile workers' general strike. What, then, should be the basic lessons from the strike to be drawn by the revolutionary wing of the Indian trade union movement, what can we learn from the experiences of the strike and what must the revolutionary wing pay major attention to at the present time particularly in view of the inevitability, in connection with the general strike, of the sharpening of the economic and anti-imperialist struggle of the masses ?

The chief lesson of the strike is the necessity to intensify the struggle for the united front and for unity of the trade union movement on the basis of the class struggle, for turning the united front into the chief method of the day-to-day work of the revolutionary wing. The strike graphically showed how the united front of the broad working masses in the struggle, in action, consolidates the workers' ranks, strengthens their resistance and militancy and creates the pre-requisites for the victory of the workers' cause. The split of the strike committee by no means indicates that the working masses are not anxious for the united front. On the contrary, this split indicates that it is necessary to still more intensify the struggle for the united front, that it is necessary to set up precisely such a united front of the broad

working masses in the struggle, which would not quiver in result of the treacherous machinations and splitting policy of the bourgeois agents in the workers' ranks, which could be able to paralyse the disrupting activity of the reformists of all shades and colours. Therefore, the major task of the revolutionary wing of the Indian Trade Union Movement is to intensify the struggle for the united front both in the struggle for the workers' economic demands as well as in the anti-imperialist struggle, boldly taking the initiative for proposing to local reformist unions joint action everywhere where discontent among the workers can be observed, wherever arbitrariness is seen, signing such agreements on the basis of the class and anti-imperialist struggle, electing representatives of the workers to the organs of the united front, determinedly exposing all those who sabotage the struggle for the united front and undermine the workers' struggle, simultaneously not permitting any sectarian or leftist mistakes and deviations. Effective application of the tactics of the united front will be able much more than loud phrases to expose and really show up to the masses all those who come out against the workers in the interests of the capitalists and governments.

### **For Mass Class Union**

Fighting for the extension of the united front, for the realisation of class unity, the revolutionary wing must boldly and immediately take the initiative for the struggle for uniting the scattered and split revolutionary and reformist unions on the basis of a programme of the class and anti-imperialist struggle, on the basis of electing executives of the united unions comprised of shop delegates, on the basis of trade union democracy. At the present moment the problem of uniting the revolutionary and reformist textile workers' unions is particularly urgent, especially the Girmi Kamgar Unions in Bombay, as well as the parallel unions of the Great Indian Peninsular and Bombay-Baroda and Central-Indian Railways. In the event that the reformist leadership decides to sabotage the proposal of the revolutionary wing for unity, the adherents of the latter must appeal to the broad masses, exposing the saboteurs, setting up over the heads and against the

will of the reformist trade union bureaucrats, committees of the united front and trade union unity, calling unity conferences, etc. And, of course, such extreme sectarian slogans as "Down with the Police Union of Alve, Kandalkar and Roy," and "In one branch of industry there must only be one COMMUNIST union" can do nothing but harm to the revolutionary trade union movement, in its struggle for the masses, for winning over the broad strata of the working class.

The appraisal of the whole union as being a police union means to take an impermissible attitude towards the masses of more backward workers, temporarily misled by the national reformists, who have still not convinced themselves of the correctness of the policy and tactics of the revolutionary trade union movement.

The call for organising Communist Unions narrows down the mass base of the revolutionary trade union movement to the extreme, and must inevitably lead to isolating the adherents of the revolutionary wing from the masses, to turning these unions into narrow sectarian groups, steeped in their own prejudices. It is necessary, on the contrary, not to isolate ourselves in narrow sectarian "Communist Union", but to fight energetically for establishing MASS CLASS UNIONS, lining up broad strata of the workers, regardless of political conviction, to fight for immediately uniting all existing parallel unions. Only in this way will the revolutionary trade union movement be able to consolidate and close up the ranks of the proletarian forces and mobilise the broad masses against capitalism and imperialism.

### **Work in the Reformist Unions**

While fighting for the united front and unity it is simultaneously necessary always to bear in mind that the united front and unity are not aims in themselves, that the adherents of the revolutionary wing wage the struggle for the united front and unity for the purpose of further developing and deepening the struggle against the offensive of capital, against imperialist oppression. The united front and unity must by no means lead at any time to smoothing down and glossing over principle differences, to ideological capitulation on the part of the

revolutionary trade union movement before national reformism, to withdrawal from the positions of the class struggle. The adherents of the revolutionary trade union movement fight for the united front and unity, not for the pleasure's sake of sitting side by side with the reformist leaders at one table, but for the sake of establishing the militant revolutionary united front of the broad strata of workers for waging a victorious struggle against the imperialist and Indian exploiters. And the best guarantee for realising precisely such a united front and unity is to rally representatives of the workers themselves for participation in the work of the leadership of struggles, and to determinedly expose all machinations of the reformist leaders, directed to disrupt the struggles for the workers' interests to sabotage the united front and unity.

A no less important lesson of the general strike is the necessity to activise our work in the reformist union. The strike clearly showed that despite the all-round growing aspiration of the masses for the united front in the struggle against the capitalist offensive and imperialist oppression, in spite of the growing discontent of the masses with the National Congress and reformist leaders, the latter succeeded in withholding the workers of a number of important centres from the struggle (Ahmedabad, Madras), from joining the strike, hampering the development of a mass solidarity movement. This must serve as a good warning and lesson to the revolutionary wing of the Indian trade union movement. First of all, not to adhere to a policy of 'drifting, to a policy of the spontaneous pressure of the masses, who can sweep aside all obstacles on their way, but to patiently and daily organise and head this spontaneous discontent and struggle of the masses. Secondly, not to remain satisfied merely with the growing discontent of the masses with the reformist leaders, not to wait until the working masses automatically free themselves from under the influence of the reformist leaders, but to shift the centre of gravity of their everyday practical work for winning over the workers lined up precisely in the reformist unions, bearing in mind that these unions unite considerable sections of workers, that the sphere of influence of these unions goes beyond their

organisational framework and that without energetically developing the work in the reformist unions it will be impossible to win over the masses and lead them to battle, it will be impossible to fight successfully against the reformist influence in the midst of the toiling masses. Therefore, the major task of the revolutionary wing of the Indian trade union movement is whilst fighting for the united front and for uniting the revolutionary and reformist unions on the basis of the class struggle, to intensify the struggle in all reformist unions, especially in the unions of textile workers, seamen, railwaymen, setting up within these strong revolutionary opposition groups, recruiting members into these unions on the platform of concrete day-to-day demands and struggle of the workers, and thus strengthening the influence and re-inforcing the positions of the revolutionary wing. The activation of work in the reformist unions will help the adherents of the revolutionary wing in their struggle for the united front and trade union unity, for winning over the majority of the working class, against the machinations of the reformist leaders for disrupting the workers' struggle.

### **The Unemployed and Peasantry**

A radical turn must be brought about in the work in the reformist unions. Work in the reformist unions and the struggle for winning over the masses of these organisations acquires particular importance in connection with the attempts of the Government to smash the revolutionary trade union movement, to prohibit the Communist Party, etc. Of course, the revolutionary wing is bound to meet with endless obstacles along this path, created not only by the Government and employers. Facts are already known about the reformist leaders taking steps to-day for helping the government to persecute revolutionary elements of the trade union movement. This charges the revolutionary wing with the task of carrying on even more energetic work in the midst of the masses lined up in the reformist unions, even more effective application of the tactic of the united front in their struggle for winning over the masses, and thus rapidly overcoming all sectarian mistakes which only serve to aid the "left" national

reformists in their splitting tactics. In this connection the adherents of the revolutionary trade union movement when developing their work in the reformist unions, must remember that the task of intensifying work in the shops by no means contradicts the task of intensifying it in the reformist unions, but, on the contrary, supplements and concretises it. The united front, as the chief method of work, the reformist unions as the most effective road for mobilising the masses for the class and anti-imperialist struggle, for isolating the masses from the treacherous reformist leaders.

The strike showed up also a number of other defects in the work of the revolutionary wing and stressed the necessity of overcoming these defects as soon as possible. Thus, the strike showed the absolutely insufficient work carried on by the revolutionary wing amongst the unemployed, which could not but lighten the task of the employers to recruit strike-breakers from among them. The development of day-to-day work among the unemployed, whose ranks are steadily growing and linking up the struggle of the unemployed with the struggle of the workers in production, is a task of paramount importance for the revolutionary wing. The strike also showed that the revolutionary wing does not fight sufficiently for linking up the struggle of the workers with the struggle of the peasantry.

## **Lessons and Conclusions**

To take all lessons of the textile workers' general strike into consideration, to draw all necessary conclusions from the experiences acquired in the strike, to activate the more backward sections, to overcome all weaknesses and defects, especially with regard to applying the tactic of the united front—such are the tasks confronting the revolutionary wing as a whole as well as every adherent of the revolutionary wing separately.

In connection with the strike, the government and manufacturers undertook after its termination a fresh offensive against the working class. The Government drove the Communist Party underground, is now smashing the revolutionary trade union movement, has issued a decree about arbitration, which in reality

deprives the workers of the right to strike, and leaves them to the mercy of the imperialist officials, throws revolutionary working-class leaders into prison. The employers are now attacking the workers, are cutting their wages. The reformist leaders, for whom the government paves the way by means of its terrorist persecution of the revolutionary trade union movement, have in turn begun to "purge" the unions of revolutionary elements, for the purpose of checking the activity of the masses and disrupting the struggle of the workers.

However, the activity of the working masses has not diminished. The masses are everywhere coming forward to fight. The Indian textile workers, recovering from the blows dealt them during the strike, are again collecting their forces and preparing for a fresh struggle. It is up to the revolutionary wing to head the activity of the masses and mobilise them for a relentless struggle against exploitation and oppression on the basis of applying the revolutionary tactic of the united front.



## The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India (\*)

Rajani Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley

The Indian national struggle is to-day at a critical point. British Imperialism has succeeded in imposing its *constitution* of open subjection in the face of the opposition of the entire Indian nation. The first stage of the struggle against it has met with defeat. For the moment there is confusion in the national camp as to the path forward. At the same time the ever worsening situation and sharpening struggle of the masses of workers and peasants calls ever more loudly for organisation and leadership.

If we look at the world situation we see that all over the world the anti-imperialist struggle is gathering strength and advancing. In *Egypt* the united mass struggle is exercising powerful pressure on British Imperialism. In *China* the popular forces of resistance to partition and for national unity and liberation are gathering around the central core of *Soviet China*, consisting of at least sixty millions who have already thrown off the imperialist yoke. In *Abyssinia* the entire people is fighting for their freedom with arms in hand and driving back the foreign invader, and the popular forces in all countries are supporting their struggle. In *South America* the People's Anti-Imperialist Front is making great advances.

What of the situation in India? Since the abandonment of mass civil disobedience we see a confusion of forces and no powerful united movement of resistance to British Imperialism, which rules with more triumphant reaction than ever. Some voice are raised to advocate co-operation in working the new constitution. Others

\*Known as 'DUTT-BRADLEY THESIS'. Published in INPRECORR of 29th February, 1936. Also published in "THE LABOUR MONTHLY", March 1936, London.

advocate retreat from the political field to concentrate on village industries or on the removal of caste disabilities. *Gandhi* has proclaimed his retirement from politics. The *National Congress*, apart from the electoral field, has given up for the time the attempt to direct the struggle, and even in the electoral field is sharply divided on the future policy, to accept office or not to accept office.

The peasants and workers, suffering under ever heavier economic distress, find themselves without united and centralised leadership in their sporadic struggles. Over the past ten years we have witnessed tremendous strike waves and economic unrest, hundreds of thousands of textile workers, railwaymen, jute workers and dockers carrying on insistent strike struggles with heroic determination against wage cuts and worsened conditions. Among the peasantry, the hardest hit section of the population, their inability to meet the demands of the landlord, moneylender and collector, results in evictions, strikes and clashes with the armed forces of the government. Alongside this there is terrible mass unemployment seriously affecting not only the workers and peasants but also the middle class.

How can we transform this situation? How can we unite and mobilise a powerful movement of resistance to British Imperialism and for the needs of the masses? This is the key problem of the Indian situation.

The *Indian National Congress* will shortly be meeting in *Lucknow*. The representatives of the main body of the Indian national struggle will have to consider the problems of the path forward. What shall be the programme at the coming elections? What shall be the policy of the national representatives who are elected? What shall be the future line of direction of the national struggles to defeat Imperialism? The Left-wing elements are pressing for a line of irreconcilable struggle against Imperialism, for an advance of the programme to reflect the growing influence of *socialist-ideas*, and for the organisation of the workers and peasants as the decisive practical task. The Right-wing elements are making gestures for unity with the Liberals and other elements outside the Congress who have abstained from participation in the

common struggle and stand for co-operation with imperialism. The discussion will be sharp. The decisions will be of far-reaching significance.

It is at this stage that the present proposals are put forward for the consideration of all who, whether inside or outside the Congress are concerned for the advance of Indian national liberation.

### **The First Need—Unity**

Every Indian patriot will recognise that the first need for the successful advance of the Indian national struggle, the key need of the present situation, is unity of all the anti-imperialist forces in the common struggle. This is the indispensable condition for the successful fight against the existing and ever-sharpening reaction and oppression.

But what is unity? Talk of unity, of the United Front, is to-day on the lips of all. But many different proposals are put forward in its name.

Thus, some, as in the recent speeches of *Babu Rajendra Prasad*, late President of Congress, urge unity with moderate or Right-wing elements at present outside the Congress, such as the Liberals, the friends and allies of British rulers, whose programme is one of co-operation with imperialism and entry into office in order to assist the slave constitution to function successfully. Naturally the Liberals from their point of view, as shown in the recent speech of *V.S. Srinivasa Sastri*, at *Madras*, heartily welcome such proposals of unity, provided they may maintain their programme of service to imperialism, since they have no mass following themselves and only so many hope to win a basis to enter office and carry out their programme.

But will this strengthen the anti-imperialist forces? While it is evident that all elements, including those from among the Liberals who are prepared to break with co-operation with imperialism and accept the programme of the national struggle, are welcome to the common front, this can only be on condition of acceptance of irreconcilable struggle against imperialism for complete independence (as already laid down in the Congress programme by the Lahore decisions). It is obvious that a so-called "unity"

with the friends of the British, achieved by surrendering the struggle against imperialism, could only weaken the united front against imperialism and not strengthen it.

### **The Anti-Imperialist People's Front**

From this it follows that Unity cannot be regarded as something abstract, but can only be unity on the basis of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Much as we may desire to see unity of the whole Indian people in the struggle against foreign rule, we have to recognise that there cannot be an abstract "unity" of the entire Indian population, 100 per cent, all sections and classes, against British Imperialism. Some sections have their interest bound up with imperialism, e.g., the princes, landlords, moneylenders, reactionary, religious and political elements which live on exploiting communal differences, elements among the merchants and wealthy classes who favour co-operation with imperialism, etc. The cunning British rulers have known how to follow the old maxim : "Divide and rule," and build up their dominion on elements of support within the population; and in consequence, in estimating the forces of the national struggle, we have to take into account the realities of the class-structure of the population under the conditions of Imperialism.

But there can be unity of the overwhelming majority of the population against imperialism, i.e., of all the popular masses who suffer under imperialist rule, and of all the elements from other classes who are prepared to joint in the common struggle for national liberation.

What is the necessary basis for such unity of all the anti-imperialist forces, such as can unite all the forces of the National Congress, the trade unions, the peasants' organisations, the youth organisations, etc., on a common platform in a mighty common front?

It is clear that the essential minimum basis for such a grouping is (1) a line of consistent struggle against imperialism and against the existing slave constitution, for the complete independence of India: (2) active struggle for the vital needs of the toiling masses.

This is the unity of the Indian people we want, the United Anti-Imperialist People's Front for the struggle against imperialism.

### **The Role of the National Congress in Realising Unity**

At this point the question will be asked : What is the relation of the National Congress to the Anti-Imperialist People's Front? Is not the National Congress, as many of its leaders claim, already the united front of the Indian people in the national struggle?

The National Congress has undoubtedly achieved a gigantic task in uniting wide forces of the Indian people for the national struggle, and remains to-day the principal existing mass organisation of many divers elements seeking national liberation. Nothing should be allowed to weaken the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress, and the proposals that are here put forward are only intended to endeavour to find means to assist and extend that unity to a still wider front.

We on the Left have many times criticised sharply the existing leadership and tactics of the National Congress. We have found many decisions and policies, such as the calling off of mass civil disobedience in 1922, at the moment when it was ready to enter on its greatest strength, the uncertain voice on the aim of independence, the wavering in the relations to imperialism, the siding with the landlords against the peasants, the Delhi Pact, the co-operation in the Round Table Conference, the Poona calling off of the struggle in 1934, disastrous to the true interests of the national struggle and equivalent to surrender to imperialism. We have traced these decisions and policies to the existing dominant bourgeois leadership, whose interests often conflict with the interests of the masses and with the interests of the national struggle. These issues, of the utmost importance for the future, need to be discussed and fought out. But this criticism against particular policies is in no sense intended as a criticism against the masses in the Congress. Our opposition to a particular leadership or to particular policies is only intended to assist the mass army of the national struggle, represented by the Congress, and to assist and strengthen the national struggle.

The National Congress can play a great part and a foremost part in the work of realising the Anti-Imperialist People's Front. It is even possible that the National Congress, by the further transformation of its organisation and programme, may become the form of realisation of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front; for it is the reality that matters, not the name.

But it is necessary to recognise that the National Congress, as it exists at present, is not yet the united front of the Indian people in the national struggle. Its constitution still leaves out the broadest sections of the masses. Its programme does not yet express with full clearness the programme of the national struggle. Its leadership cannot yet be recognised as the leadership of the national struggle. It does not at present draw out and guide mass activity, but rather acts as a brake upon it.

What is needed is, without impairing the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress, to strengthen and extend this unity to a broader front, and to develop to a new stage the organisation and leadership of the mass struggle against imperialism.

### **Draw in the Masses**

The National Congress is at present based, not on the union of all elements supporting the national struggle, but on a restrictive individual membership, with certain limitations of franchise and of a special ideology or "creed", which prevents it from embracing the broadest front of all who support the national struggle.

The mass organisations of the workers and peasants, the trade unions and peasants' unions and all similar collective mass organisations, constituting the most important forces of the national struggle, are at present outside the National Congress. Only when all these forces are combined, the mass organisations of the workers and peasants, together with the National Congress, whether in a united front agreement or by the collective affiliation of these organisations to the Congress, will we have achieved a broad united national front, capable of developing as a real Anti-Imperialist People's Front and drawing behind it the overwhelming majority of the population, the workers, the peasants and the middle classes,

in a single army of the national struggle. Within such a bloc the working class can increasingly realise its role of vanguard, to lead to victory the Indian revolution.

The first aim should therefore be to establish a united front of the National Congress with all the existing mass organisations of the trade unions, peasants' unions, youth associations or other anti-imperialist mass organisations, in a broad Anti-Imperialist People's Front on the basis of the struggle against imperialism and its constitution and for organising the struggle of the masses for their immediate demands.

At the same time we should seek to amend the constitution of the National Congress in such a way as to permit of the collective affiliation with delegate representation, of the trade unions, peasants' unions, youth organisations, etc. This collective affiliation should be carried out not only on an All-Indian scale (All-India Trade Union Congress to the National Congress), but equally in the provinces and on a district and local scale the whole way through, thus bringing the National Congress into direct and continuous association with the masses. This collective affiliation is important, not only for the immediately existing mass organisations, but for the whole network of trade unions and peasants' unions gradually embracing wider and wider sections of the masses, which Congress should devote its most active efforts to assist in building up as the strongest pillars of the national struggle.

The possibility of such collective affiliation is illustrated, not only by the examples of the European Labour Parties, but still more closely by the example of the old national-revolutionary Kuomintang (before the betrayal by Chiang Kai-shek) at the height of its strength when it grouped, along with individual political members, trade unions, peasants' organisations and the Communist Party, and on this basis swept forward from strength to strength, proving the most powerful and victorious weapon up to then devised for the colonial struggle against imperialism.

While it may take a necessary process of time to carry through the campaign and introduce collective affiliation into the

constitution of the Congress, no time should be lost in already setting up on a local district, provincial and, if possible, All-India scale, joint bodies of the Congress committees, trade unions, peasant unions, youth association, Congress Socialist groups and other groups and anti-imperialist organisations, uniting for the purposes of combining the campaign against imperialism in the Anti-Imperialist People's Front.

Actually united front bodies have been already set up in localities—not permanent but temporary bodies which show the possibilities—in places like Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere. United Front demonstrations and meetings were held in *Bombay* in February last year against the new slave constitution; these and similar actions were supported by trade unionists, Congress Socialists, Congressmen, Communists, etc. These actions, of course, were only the very first signs, but they show the urge for, and possibilities of, the Anti-Imperialist People's Front.

### **Democratise the Constitution of the Congress**

In order that the Congress shall really become based on the masses, it is not sufficient merely in a formal fashion to draw the mass organisations into its structure; it is necessary to elicit the initiative and responsibility of the masses in the direction and policy of the Congress, so that the policy shall really become governed from below.

The existing working of the Congress machinery cannot be regarded as democratic. In practice a very small handful of leaders hold absolute control. In particular, the *Working Committee*, which has the greatest power and takes the most important executive decisions, is not an elected body, and cannot be regarded as representative of the sections of opinion in the rank and file of the Congress. Similarly, in the provinces and localities the degree of control from below is very weak.

An exhaustive overhauling of the constitution is necessary in order to bring it into accord with modern democratic conceptions of a popular party, and to ensure, not only the forms of democracy, but that these shall be realised in the practical working—i.e., widening of facilities for raising issues and putting forward



resolutions from the membership, prior circulation of agenda with opportunities for discussion mandating of delegates, etc., active political life and discussion in all the local organisations, election from below of all committees and officers, etc.

Centralised direction is essential for the purposes of the struggle, but this centralised direction must be on the principles, not of personal dictatorship, but of democratic centralism, i.e., elected from below and responsible to the representatives of the lower organs.

### **A Clear Programme of Anti-Imperialist Struggle**

Then again much requires to be done to establish and ensure universal acceptance of a clear and unambiguous programme of anti-imperialist struggle both in the National Congress and for the whole Anti-Imperialist People's Front.

At present, despite the decisions of the Lahore Congress on the aim of Independence, there is still much confusion even on the central aim. Definitions of the meaning of "Purna Swaraj" are as thick as blackberries on a bush, and cover the most contradictory notions. The latest definition by the Wardha meeting of the Working Committee in September, 1934 ("included unfettered control over the army and other defence forces, external affairs, fiscal and commercial matters, and financial and economic policy"), goes back on the goal of independence and returns to the pre-Lahore aim of Dominion Status.

It is essential to establish, in unmistakable terms, the aim of *complete independence of India* as the unchangeable aim of the Indian national struggle, and therewith the rejection of all compromise and negotiation with imperialism for half measures, co-operation in working the constitution, etc.

Further, it is essential to link up the programme of the fight for independence with the immediate political demands of the struggle against imperialism and with the immediate demands of the workers and peasants for their vital needs.

The details of such a programme could be worked out in common by representatives of all the organisations concerned.

Thus, for example, such a programme might include:

- (1) The aim of complete independence for India;
- (2) Freedom of speech, press, organisation, assembly, strikes and picketing;
- (3) Repeal of all exceptional and repressive laws, ordinances and anti-labour laws (Criminal Amendment Act, Press Act, etc.);
- (4) Release of all political prisoners, detenus and internees;
- (5) Against reductions of wages and dismissals of workers; for an adequate minimum wage and 8-hour day; for 50 per cent, reduction in rents and against the seizure of peasant land for debt by Imperialists, native princes, zemindars and moneylenders.

The particular immediate demands of the struggle could be worked out and varied according to the locality and the particular conditions and stage.

A central rallying slogan for the whole movement could be provided by the demand for a *Constituent Assembly*; the conditions under which this demand could be usefully taken up and made the centre of agitation and propaganda are considered later in the present article. A platform of this type requires to be established as the common platform of the Anti-imperialist People's Front.

Similarly, the constitution and platform of the Congress requires to be worked out anew in the light of this, laying down in simple and clear form the aim of complete independence, the line of irreconcilable struggle against Imperialism and the fight for the needs of the workers and peasants. Such a platform can unite all sincere elements of the national struggle, while excluding only those elements which seek to co-operate with Imperialism.

### **The Tactics of Mass Struggle**

A similar clarification is necessary with regard to the basic tactics of the Congress and of the national struggle.

The existing ideology of "non-violence," which is still made a compulsory part of the Congress creed, is to-day a survival which is more and more visibly at variance with the realities of the struggles and less and less corresponds to the outlook of large section of the national movement. Many prominent members of

the Congress, who have formally to subscribe to this dogma as the condition of their participation in its mass activities, to-day privately declare their disbelief in it. This is not a healthy situation. While many sections may still be under the influence of the theories of "non-violence" to make this a dogma compulsory on all section is to place an obstacle in the way of unity of the national front. In fact, the experience of the nearly two decades since the war has abundantly shown that the conception of "non-violence" has been used, not merely in opposition to the fruitless policies of individual terrorism or sporadic outbreaks of a minority, but to shackle and hold in all effective mass activity and the development along the lines of the class struggle of the most powerful weapons against imperialism or mass resistance to imperialist violence, and thus, leaving free play for the violence of Imperialism, has been a dangerous and paralysing influence on the advance of the national struggle and the principle cause of the relative stagnation and failure of advance in India, despite the enormous sacrifices made, compared with other colonial countries. China and Abyssinia have shown how a people fights for its freedom against the imperialist enemy. In Egypt to-day the higher degree of aggressive mass activity is reflected in the far greater readiness of British Imperialism to offer concessions. It is essential that the Indian national movement should free itself from the paralysing conceptions of passive "non-violence" if it is to defeat its enemy. A sharp ideological struggle needs to be conducted on this question, but a struggle in the ideological field, by way of ceaseless explaining and winning over. This issue should not be allowed to split the national front.

The Congress creed in consequence needs revision in accordance with the real conditions of the struggle. The dogma of "non-violence" should be omitted. The entire emphasis should be placed on the development of the mass struggle, on the work of organisation of the workers and peasants as the primary task in the field of organisation, on the active taking up of the immediate demands of the workers and peasants for their vital needs and the linking of this struggle with the political anti-imperialist struggle.

### **Consolidation of the Left-Wing**

In order to realise the Anti-Imperialist People's Front and to carry through these urgently necessary changes in the constitution, organisation, policy and work of the National Congress, it is essential that *all Left-wing elements* in the Congress should fight in unison on a common platform for these vital needs.

In the past there has been much dispersion of effort, division and mutual sniping between the Left-wing forces, thus playing into the hands of the domination of the Right-wing leadership. While it is necessary and desirable that the differences of political outlook and conception which exist between the different groupings should be thoroughly discussed and cleared in comradely discussion, this should not stand in the way of the fullest co-operation and common working on all the issues on which agreement can be reached, both within the Congress, and in the immediate daily struggle.

Congress Socialists, Trade Unionists, Communists and Left Congressmen should all be able to unite on the essentials of a *minimum programme* of anti-imperialist struggle for complete independence, of organisation of the masses and development of mass struggle, and of the fight for changes in the Congress constitution, policy, organisation and leadership to forward these aims. The Congress Socialist Party can play an especially important part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in the existing Congress. It is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made to clarify questions of programme and tactics in the Congress Socialist Party.

It is this way the first stage of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front could be built up already in the common fight, stressing particularly the local, district and provincial basis.

At the same time it is essential to recognise that the task of consolidation of the Left-wing forces renders more necessary and responsible than ever the role and the activity of the Communists in this process, since they have the most responsible role to play in ensuring the political clearness of the fight, in pressing forward the drive to unity in action, and guiding the aims of the movement towards the goals of political and social liberation.

Through the consolidation of the Left-wing forces, the first stage of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front can be built up already in the common fight, particular stress being laid in the early stages upon its development on a local and district basis.

### **The Anti-Imperialist Front in the Elections**

The question of the elections is of cardinal importance for the anti-Imperialist front.

On the one hand, it is essential that the clear line of the anti-Imperialist front, the line of consistent struggle for complete independence, against all co-operation with Imperialism and its constitution, and for the demands of the masses, should be challengingly voiced at the elections, and that the outlook of these vast sections of the national movement must not be stifled.

On the other hand, it is essential that unity of the national front should be maintained against the Imperialists and their allies, and there should be no splitting of the vote for the benefit of the reactionary Right-wing elements outside the Congress who stand for co-operation with Imperialism.

The best means to realise this requires the most earnest consideration of all supporters of the national struggle.

We would suggest that the anti-Imperialist bloc, constituted on its programme of complete independence, no co-operation with imperialism, and active struggle for the demands of the masses, should seek agreement with the existing leadership of the Congress (within which the Congress Socialists, grouping the radical elements, represent already a substantial minority of roughly one-third of the forces and a potential majority) to run its candidates directly on this programme in a certain number of seats (or to be able to include them as a group with their specific programme within the Congress panel), as recognised candidates of the united national front, co-operating with the Congress candidates in other constituencies who run on the official programme. The details of this arrangement will need careful working out; but with goodwill on both sides, such an arrangement should be possible.

Every effort requires to be made to prevent a splitting of the national front in the elections; but such unity should not be utilised to stifle the Left-wing forces of the anti-Imperialist bloc.

### **The Constituent Assembly as the Central Slogan of the Struggle**

In order to concentrate the struggle against the slave constitution imposed by the British government, we cannot rest satisfied with the negative programme of rejection of the constitution and refusal of co-operation, but must counterpose our positive slogan.

Corresponding to the existing stages of the movement, the time is now undoubtedly favourable to launch as our central slogan the demand for the convening of a *Constituent Assembly*, based upon a universal and equal franchise and direct and secret ballot.

In the past there has been much discussion on the slogan of a Constituent Assembly. On the one hand, it has been presented in such a form as if the existing National Congress were to be regarded already as the Constituent Assembly of the Indian people. On the other hand, it has been presented as if it were to be regarded as an alternative to the aim of Soviets, as the political aim of the Indian Revolution. Both these outlooks are incorrect and require to be combated. But this necessary criticism of misleading conceptions has given rise to the alternative danger of the conception that the slogan of a Constituent Assembly is as such and at all times inadmissible and in inevitable opposition to the aim of Soviets. This would be a serious misunderstanding; the example of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution has shown how in a given situation the slogan of a Constituent Assembly can be a most powerful mobilising force which can be combined with the propaganda of Soviet Power as the ultimate aim.

Is the situation now in India such that this slogan of a Constituent Assembly would be a correct slogan of action for the coming stage? Yes. At a time when the British government is imposing its new constitution of slavery upon the Indian nation, and preparing its mockery of elections from which the voice of nine-tenths of the people is excluded and the remainder barred from effective representation with any power to their representatives, it is essential

to spread broadcast, in opposition to the line of Imperialism, the demand for a Constituent Assembly freely elected upon a basis of universal suffrage. In putting this forward the Communists will in no wise weaken their propaganda for the aim of Soviet Power. The Constituent Assembly is a slogan of action for mobilising the masses at the present stage of the struggle.

But at the same time it is necessary to explain on every occasion on which the issue of a Constituent Assembly is raised, both within the National Congress, and in mass propaganda, that a real Constituent Assembly can only be realised as a result of a broad movement of the masses, of the people in active struggle. The significance of the slogan of a Constituent Assembly is as a mobilising slogan of the mass struggle at the present stage. As such it should become the central slogan of action of the present stage of the national struggle and of the Anti-Imperialist People's Front, uniting all the partial and immediate struggles in this central political fight.

The need for the speedy realisation of the broadest Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India is the more urgent, not only for the reasons of the situation now existing within India, but in view of the whole international situation as it is developing and effecting India. The war question is now of burning urgency. The Italian war on Abyssinia, alongside the ever-extending Japanese aggression in China, is the signal of the advance of imperialism to a new world war. The sympathies of the Indian people are warmly united with the Abyssinian people in their resistance to the Italian war of aggression, and with the Chinese national struggle against Japanese and all other imperialists. But at the same time it is necessary to sharpen the struggle against the war preparations of British Imperialisms, which fall with merciless heaviness on the Indian masses. The imminence of new world war makes more than ever necessary the unity and readiness of the national front in India.

In conclusion, it should be stated that these proposals are put forward for the consideration of all supporters of the struggle for national liberation in India, as an attempt to trace the main outline of the path of advance in the present immediate situation and with

the given relations of forces. The realisation of this next stage of advance, the realisation of a broad-based, all-embracing and powerful Anti-Imperialists People's Front, should rapidly open the way to new perspectives for the Indian national movement.



## **Towards Trade Union Unity in India**

**Rajani Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley**

The growing determination of the Indian working-class to struggle for unity in the trade union field is a most significant and welcome feature of the present situation in India. To establish one united centralised trade union movement constitutes the most important immediate task facing the Indian working-class. That this task is not easy was shown by the events which took place when the Trade Union Congress and National Trades Union Federation met at the end of last year at Nagpur. Credit is, however, due to the persistence of the militant section in the trade union movement for consistently pursuing a number of steps towards unification. These steps, taken by the militant section of the trade union movement of India, have resulted in the achievement of a number of successes in the struggle for the consolidation of the forces of the working-class in the country.

Few sections of the working-class throughout the world can show a better record of class-struggle than the Indian working-class during the last six years. Both on the economic as well as the political front, the Indian working-class has conducted a series of important determined and bitter struggles. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to recognise that with all the determination of the workers these struggles have been seriously impaired by the breaches in the ranks of the movement. This is clear if we take some of the outstanding struggles; such as the G.I.P. Railwaymen's strike of 1930; from the very beginning the position of the railway workers was considerably weakened by their ranks being divided. Similarly,

with the Bengal Jute Workers' strike of 1930, and the many Textile Workers' strikes in the years following in Bombay, Nagpur and elsewhere. The more recent examples are shown with the Dock Workers' strike in 1934, in Bombay, and the Dock Workers' strike in 1934-35, in Calcutta.

All these struggles were conducted with determination, vigour and sacrifice, but without unity in the face of the enemy. With their ranks broken the workers can put up but feeble resistance to the continued attacks upon their economic standards; at the same time they are unable to present to the employers united demands for better conditions. The determination of the working-class of India to establish a united working-class movement springs from these experiences and this situation.

### **The Advance of Unity**

Already steps of tremendous importance have been taken to achieve this unity. The first struggle to obtain unity was in connection with the *All-India Textile Workers' Strike* of 1934. This was followed by the unification, on the basis of the class-struggle and Trade Union Democracy, of the *Red Trade Union Congress* and the *All-India Trade Union Congress* in April, 1935.

We have always stood by and stand today by the principle that an effective and powerful trade union movement requires all embracing class solidarity of the workers. At the same time the representatives of different view points within the trade unions should be free to conduct propaganda for their viewpoints and policy on the issues that arise, always avoiding all disruptive conflicts and loyally maintaining discipline in the common struggle. Here we feel that the importance cannot be over-estimated of the acceptance at *Calcutta* of the two points as the necessary basis of trade union unity; (1) acceptance of the class-struggle and, (2) Internal trade union democracy. These two points must be emphasised and form the corner stone of the future trade union movement; they will help to ensure a vital, fighting, mass trade union movement in India.

Following the achievement of unity between the two Trade Union Congresses at Calcutta the militant workers set about the

task of amalgamating, on the basis of the principles accepted by the parallel Red and National Reformist Girni Kamgar Unions in Bombay and Nagpur, also the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Unions. This trade union action will inevitably lead towards the establishment of trade union unity and the mobilisation of the forces of the Indian working-class in their struggle for their immediate demands, political rights and for the independence of the country from British Imperialism. Of particular importance and significance was the tremendous enthusiasm with which the workers of *Bombay* welcomed the steps to unite the two textile workers' unions. Such scenes of enthusiasm had not been witnessed since the days of the formation of the *Lal Bavta Girni Kamgar Union*; over 10,000 workers turned out to vote for the office bearers of the United Girni Kamgar Union. It is also of particular significance that several official positions were secured by the old office bearers of the *Red* trade union, while on the other hand extreme right-wing leaders like Alve and Kandalkar were thoroughly defeated.

The establishment of the *Joint Labour Board* was the next step taken towards the further extension of the workers united front. The Joint Labour Board was established to co-ordinate the activities of the amalgamated T.U.C. and the National Trades Union Federation, and to draw the mass of trade union workers and local organisations of the right reformist unions closer to the workers in other unions towards trade union unity and to participate in the class-struggle.

Alongside the establishment of the Joint Labour Boards there were organised in *Bombay, Calcutta, Nagpur* and elsewhere joint mass meeting and demonstrations against the new slave constitution, against the ban on militant workers' organisations, against the fascist aggressive war on Abyssinia, and joint demonstrations on May Day. Many of these demonstrations, meetings and actions were organised on the basis of the united front with the Congress Socialist Party, with Provincial, District and Town Committees of the National Congress, etc., and indicated the broadening out of activity, and the fact that the working-class movement was taking its place, not merely in immediate economic struggles, but in the political field.

It is necessary also to place on record the fact of the active participation of the adherents of the militant trade union movement in the *Radical Political Conference* both in Bombay and Nagpur (November, 1935). All these are indications of the increasing activity of the masses in the struggle against war and imperialism, and testify to the fact that the Communists and the adherents of the militant trade union movement are steadily overcoming the remnants of sectarianism, and the isolation of the trade union movement from the anti-imperialist front.

### **Opposition to Trade Union Unity**

The intense desire of the workers for unity manifested itself at Nagpur towards the end of last year when the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Trades Union Federation met simultaneously. Yet despite the efforts made, particularly by the militant section, to bring the T.U. movement under one head, this was not achieved.

The Executive Committee of the A.I.T.U.C. formulated certain proposals for unity, and it appears that the most important of these were: (1) The name of the organisation shall be the All-India Trade Union Congress; (2) The constitution shall be that of the National Trade Union Federation, with modifications if necessary; and (3) that the first working committee shall consist of an equal number of officials from both organisations. To which a couple of sub-points were added; (a) No affiliation to any foreign organisation. (B) The amalgamated central working-class organisation to accept the principle of sending delegates to Geneva.

It is quite reasonable to draw the conclusion from the above that the Executive of the A.I.T.U.C. were prepared to sink everything in the interests of trade union unity. But it is amazing, in view of the principles accepted at Calcutta, that the important question of trade union democracy does not appear at all, while it was not thought necessary to stress the principle of the class-struggle, the reason being, according to R.S. Ruikar, that the principle of class-struggle was acceptable to both groups.

The tremendous demand for working-class unity has its repercussion in the discussions in the General Council of the

National Trade Union Federation. In fact reports show that there was a majority in the body who favoured immediate structural unity, while a section of the member favoured "Unity by stages". This opposition to immediate unity was lead by N.M. Joshi, whose demand was equivalent to a call for capitulation of the A.I.T.U.C., that it should unconditionally enter the National Federation, the Federation leadership reserving the right to accept whom it thought fit and to reject those with whom it did not see eye to eye. To have accepted such a position would have been to have betrayed the fundamental principles of the working-class. The working-class members of the National Federation and the A.I.T.U.C. demand unity not capitulation, unity based upon the recognition of the principles of the class-struggle in practice and complete trade union democracy.

Despite the majority in favour, the resolution for immediate unity was withdrawn and a resolution given wider powers to the Joint Board, and extending the principle of such Joint Boards to the Provinces, was agreed to. Unity for the moment is sidetracked, nevertheless, the policy of N.M. Joshi must be fought and the struggle to achieve one united trade union movement must go on with redoubled energy.

### **Weaknesses in Carrying Through The Struggle for Unity**

While we can place on record a number of successes achieved by the adherents of the militant section of the trade union movement, it is necessary at the same time to emphasis that certain incorrect approaches have been made in their activities in actual struggle. One of the most striking examples was the refusal of the adherents of the militant T.U. movement from the Nagpur amalgamated textile workers' union to let the national reformist leaders and officials of this union participate in the leadership of the *Hingangat Textile Workers' Strike*. So far was this carried that the national reformist leaders of the amalgamated textile workers' union and of the T.U.C. were refused the floor at the strikers meetings, etc. This policy made it easier for the reformist leaders to apply their policy of expelling the adherents of the militant trade union movement, with the result that the struggle for trade union unity was hampered.

Further examples are that of the organisation of *Lal Banya Press Kamgar Union* of a provincial press workers' conference, and also an All-India Conference—an excellent piece of work, but done without the participation of the nationalist reformist unions which are in existence. Another example of surviving sectarianism is that of the decision of the *Calcutta Tramwaymen's Union*, to remain an independent union and not to affiliate to the amalgamated Trade Union Congress; to this extent our forces inside the Trade Union Congress struggling for T.U. unity are weakened. We recognise the difficulties of our comrades, but these must not prevent us taking the lead always and every time on the question of trade union unity.

One of the most difficult problems with which the adherents of the militant trade union movement are faced is that of the *Ahmedabad Textile Workers*. Here we have the second largest textile centre in India, with the largest textile workers' union in India — the *Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association* with a membership of 25,000. We will agree that it can be called a company union, and that there is almost an entire absence of trade union democracy in connection with its methods of work; many examples of this can be cited, the latest being the set-back the workers suffered when the Delhi agreement was imposed upon them. The adherents of the militant section of the trade union movement have struggled to establish their position and organise the Ahmedabad workers in the *Mail Kamgar Union*. Here they have met with the most vigorous Government repression, *V.J. Patel*, in a speech recently to the textile workers, incited Government action against the militant T.U. workers, comrades have been arrested and the union declared illegal. The adherents of the militant trade union movement, grouping themselves outside the Labour Association, remain isolated from these 25,000 organised workers, unable to influence the policy of the Association, unable to give a lead.

This isolation and these remnants of sectarianism find their most striking expression in the almost entire absence of work at the present time, in the largest right-reformist unions, affiliated to the National Federation, as well as independent ones, and in the

inadequate initiative and activity in developing the united front struggle in defence of the immediate economic demands of the working-class.

In order to overcome this weakness a more vigorous attitude is needed towards the training of cadres among the workers for leading trade union positions, not merely organisations where they have influence but in the right-reformist organisations, in the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Associations, etc. With this there is the urgent need for the workers' press reflecting the policy and tactics of the militant section of the trade union movement. If our comrades could put into effect these questions many of our shortcomings would be quickly overcome.

### **Next Steps For Trade Union Unity**

We feel that the adherents of the militant trade union movement, working in the trade unions of India, will be able to greatly strengthen their position and place themselves in the forefront of the struggle provided they are able to concentrate their attention on and carry through the following suggestions.

It is necessary to carry through at the earliest possible moment the amalgamation of the parallel Lal Baita and National-reformist trade unions still existing in a number of centres and industries. This should be immediately applied to the unions on the G.I.P. Railway, to the press workers, to the textile workers in all centres—linking up these centres, and to a number of unions in Bengal. The next step would be the transformation of the amalgamated trade unions into powerful mass organisations. This would constitute the major task in the struggle for the elimination of the split in the trade union movement. When we recognise that only a very small percentage of the industrial workers of India are organised in the trade union movement and what tremendous possibilities there are, the next task obviously is to achieve powerful mass organisations. To do this every amalgamated union would declare a "recruitment month" and make the recruiting of new members one of the most important tasks of the trade union.

Provided the adherents of the militant trade union movement abide by the basic principles and conditions of the amalgamation,

established by the Calcutta agreement on the amalgamation of the two trade union Congresses (class-struggle and trade union democracy), show flexibility in solving the questions of the forms and procedure of the amalgamation, and take into account in every case the concrete situation and strength of the Lal Baita or militant and reformist unions—to the extent that these principles are observed will we carry into life the Calcutta agreement by turning the amalgamated T.U. Congress into a real weapon of consolidating the masses and strengthening the militant trade union movement.

A persistent struggle for the united front in action against the offensive of capitalism and imperialism, and for the amalgamation of the local unions affiliated to the amalgamated Trade Union Congress with the parallel unions of the right reformist Trade Union Federation, will create the basis and accelerate the amalgamation of both these T.U. centres into a unified T.U. Congress, based on the class-struggle and trade union democracy. The immediate struggle can be developed for one union on the B.B.C.I. Railway, one union on the G.I.P. Railway, one union for the dock workers, one for the seamen and so on.

Unity of action between the trade unions of the T.U.C. and unions of the National Trade Union Federation can be greatly facilitated by full use being taken of the proposal to extend the principle of Joint Labour Boards to the Provinces. By our joint work and action with the workers in the unions under the National Trade Union Federation we should greatly strengthen the demand for trade union unity. The struggle for the amalgamation of the T.U. Congress and the National T.U. Federation, on the basis of class-struggle and trade union democracy, necessitates a strengthening of business-like, concrete criticism of the policy of class collaboration, pursued by reformist leaders, and an exposure before the working-class of all the opponents of trade union unity, of all reformist leaders who endeavour to replace unity on the basis of class-struggle by unity on the basis of class collaboration and expulsion of the militant forces from the amalgamated unions.



### **The Development of United Struggle**

The struggle for the united front and trade union unity will not achieve its aim if it remains isolated and divorced from the developing struggle of the working-class for its immediate economic and political demands. The united front and trade union unity should become a mighty weapon for strengthening the working-class-struggle against the ever continuing and, in some centres, intensifying offensive of capital, against the anti-labour and emergency laws of the Imperialist Government, aiming to deprive still further the workers of their remnants of political rights.

The task of the adherents of the militant trade union movement should be to show the greatest possible activity and initiative in developing and extending the struggle of the working-class for its vital economic demands, taking into account the situation in various industries, and mobilising the masses for the struggle around urgent slogans and demands, based upon the vital needs of the masses and the degree of their fighting capacity.

Questions such as the fight against wage cuts, for the restoration of the cuts effected in the past period, for insurance against sickness and accidents, for the reinstatement of dismissed workers, for non-contributory unemployment insurance, against the anti-working-class laws, etc., are the questions agitating at present the broadest masses of workers. These are the slogans around which the workers should be rallied for a counter-offensive fight against capitalism and imperialism. All these issues should be linked up with the struggle for the workers' elementary political rights; (the right to strike, freedom of organisation, freedom of the workers' press and assembly, freedom of political prisoners, universal suffrage, etc.).

The active participation in the coming *Second All India Conference of Textile Workers* is acquiring enormous significance. It is therefore of the utmost importance to prepare carefully and thoroughly for the offensive struggle of the textile workers on the basis of the broad united front, taking into consideration that the textile workers' strikes are breaking out in many centres throughout the country. At the same time the adherents of the militant trade union movement should — in connection with the wide unrest among the railway workers — show initiative and activity in

developing work among the railwaymen. It may be considered timely, in conjunction with the *All India Railwaymen's Federation*, to call for the convening of an *All India Railwaymen's Conference* of representatives elected by the trade unions as well as at general meetings of organised and unorganised workers for the discussion and drawing up of a programme of immediate demands and action.

### **Work In Reformist Trade Unions**

Persistent, systematic work inside the reformist trade unions is among the most important conditions of a successful struggle for the everyday economic and political demands of the working masses. It is necessary to develop systematic, painstaking, everyday work in all the reformist and amalgamated trade unions. While it would be a mistake to aim at crystallising in a fixed organisational form a trade union opposition, it is necessary to carry on independent work of militant education and mobilisation of the masses, in defence of their economic and political interests, tirelessly combatting all tendencies of class collaboration, and explaining that the policy and practice of Gandhist non-violence objectively aids British Imperialism for the enslavement of the toiling masses of India.

The more determinedly to adherents of the militant trade union movement lay stress on the consolidation of the trade unions, on the recruitment of new members to the amalgamated trade unions from among the unorganised, the more actively they join in the day-to-day work and life of the trade union organisation, always remembering the specific features of every mass union and every industry, the more boldly they will be able to come out in the defence of the workers' demands — the more successful they will prove in strengthening their positions in the reformist trade unions, in gaining the confidence of the workers and leading positions in the unions, and turning the latter into organs of the class-struggle. The question of developing work in the railwaymen's textile workers', dockers', seamen and municipal workers' unions, of which some are very large and have increasingly militant membership — is acquiring particular and growing significance.

## **Trade Unions and The National Congress**

The further development and strengthening of the struggle for the affiliation of the trade unions and other workers' and also peasants' and students' organisations to the National Congress, as elective members, is of the utmost importance. The tremendous importance of this is in connection with the strengthening of the anti-imperialist forces, and is demanded with a view to a more active inclusion of the trade unions in the anti-imperialist struggle, the establishment of a broad anti-imperialist people's and the mobilisation of the rank and file of the National Congress for the struggle against British Imperialism.

While developing — in conjunction with all anti-imperialist-minded organisations, Congress Socialists, etc. — the broadest possible campaign for the affiliation of the trade unions, peasant and other mass organisations to the National Congress, this must be supported by the passing of resolutions by trade unions and at meetings, etc., calling upon the National Congress to change its constitution and admit of affiliation of these bodies, and at the same time it is also necessary to send fraternal delegates from the amalgamated Trade Union Congress, the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union and other organisations to the next session of the National Congress at Lucknow.

Such fraternal delegates should endeavor to present and defend the demand for collective affiliation of the trade unions, peasant and other organisations of the toiling masses to the National Congress. At the same time the representatives of the militant organisations should utilise in every way the platform of the National Congress in order to expound and popularise before the broad masses the viewpoint of the Left-wing Labour movement on such burning issue as the struggle against the new slave constitution, the demand for the convening of a Constituent Assembly based upon universal, equal franchise, direct and secret ballot, the struggle against imperialist war on Abyssinia and China, for the full independence of the colonial peoples, etc.

**Trade Unionism in The Elections**

The initiative and activity of the Communists and the adherents of the militant trade union movement in the coming campaign of elections to the Legislative Councils, in accordance with the new constitution acquire extremely important political significance. The militant unions and the adherents to the militant trade union movement, is the most active and advanced section of the Indian T.U. movement, should not keep apart from the elections, neither the labour constituencies nor the general territorial election districts.

In the labour constituencies, where candidates will be elected through the existing trade union organisations, we should endeavor to get the best possible militant workers returned. The campaign in the elections to the Provincial Legislative Councils must be closely connected the development of all forms of struggle of the masses. The struggle for the nomination and election of candidates of the anti-imperialist people's front, developed alongside of strengthening the struggle for the vital and clear demands of the workers, peasants and city middle-class elements, can and should result in a strengthening and extension of the anti-imperialist people's front, in an intensification of the struggle against imperialism and in a growth of the militant anti-imperialist forces.

The consolidation of the anti-imperialist people's front on the basis of an extended election campaign and the struggle for the immediate relieving of the conditions of the workers, peasants and city middle-class cannot but result in a weakening of the position of the reactionary bloc, set up in connection with the coming elections, and in an intensification of the anti-imperialist struggle. This in turn will have the effect of helping the exposure and isolation of the pro-imperialist reactionary groupings and leaders and their supporters (inside as well as outside the National Congress) who sabotage the establishment of a broad anti-imperialist people's front. All this cannot but help to strengthen the influence over the masses of the Left wing of the national liberation movement and provided the proletariat and its vanguard are active — of the role of the working-class in the anti-imperialist

people's front of struggle for the overthrow of the rule of British Imperialism.

### **Strengthening Militant Trade Unionism**

To strengthen and broaden the whole of our work in the trade union movement the adherents of the militant trade union movement should consider in the nearest future the possibilities of issuing a militant labour press, carrying propaganda through such a press from the viewpoint of the militant labour movement, publishing material on all the questions of current life in India and abroad, developing a determined struggle against the reformist ideology and policy as well as the practice of class collaboration, concretely criticising the opponents of the united front and trade union unity on the basis of class-struggle and trade union democracy, and rallying and organising the masses for the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

The question of assisting in the development of and bringing forward new militant working-class leaders is a problem facing acutely the militant section of the Indian trade union movement, and one which requires immediate solution. The promotion of leaders from the midst of the workers devoted to the cause of the working-class, from those connected with the masses and steeled in action of the class-struggle, should become the main concern of the militant trade union movement. The proper allocation of those leaders, their protection, the careful and comradely notification of any short coming and mistakes, concrete everyday leadership and political education of cadres should not bear a casual character, but become a living part of the work and struggle of the adherents of the militant trade union movement. It is, therefore, imperative that Marxist literature be issued, short-term courses organised, etc.

In conclusion we can say that during the past sixteen years the Indian working-class has waged many important and heroic economic battles and participated in the national liberation struggle. The tremendous experience over these years has shown with ever greater clearness that the Indian working-class, drawing in its wake the great mass of peasantry and all the exploited mass, is destined to lead to a finish and to final victory the fight against imperialism.

The bourgeois-landlord class have proved themselves incapable of leading the struggle; they move towards co-operation with imperialism and bitterly oppose every sign of mass struggle of the workers and peasants for fear of the menace to their own private interests. For the success in the field of economic struggle and the advance of the national struggle requires the development and extension of the mass struggle at every point. The Indian working-class has a decisive role to play in the anti-imperialist people's front as the strongest driving force.

For the working-class of India to realise this important role one thing is indispensable—the development of a united trade union movement, organising the main body of the workers on the basis of their common class interests in the daily struggle. In this manner the united working-class will not merely be able to pull its full weight in successful economic struggles, but will be able to bring its full strength to bear in the powerful anti-imperialist people's front and this will be decisive for the future victory in the struggle against British Imperialism.

## Forward to A United Party

### *Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India on PARTY UNITY*

*To all Party Members! To all Communists and Communist groups outside the Party!*

Comrades,

The present Central Committee was formed by uniting most of the isolated Communist groups existing in our country into a *centralised All-India Party*. Since then the Party has grown all round, in every way. Today we have functioning party organisations in all the major provinces, our political influence is far greater than our organisational strength, we are bending all our energies to become a political force in the country. In achieving our revolutionary tasks the first and one of the most important impediments is the fact that we are *not yet a United Party*; individual Communists and Communist groups exist outside the Party.

The Communist individuals and groups we have in mind are eager and willing to work under the leadership of the C.C., they are entirely loyal to the Communist International, wholeheartedly accept the direction of the Seventh World Congress. The Central Committee throws open the doors of the Party to them and expects all Party members to give these comrades a ready revolutionary welcome into our ranks and assimilate them in our Party organisation.

The Central Committee calls upon all Party members not to regard such comrades as coming from 'opposition' groups or being an opposition group in any real sense of the term. Every

Communist outside the Party is not necessarily a pseudo-communist. We must admit, what is a fact, that individual communists have remained outside the party, organised themselves into groups and proved their revolutionary worth by building up and becoming a part of the militant mass movement. We must find out an explanation for this—how elements whose rightful place was inside the party remained out of it and could nevertheless work among the masses. They dared remain outside the Party because the Party was weak; they as a group could build up mass organisations and mass influence because of the various mistakes of the party organisations. The existence of the independent groups is a living proof of the weakness of the party. Should such a state of affairs be allowed to continue any more? No, Never. All party comrades! join the Central Committee in saying this and prove it by your deeds.

The Central Committee declares that it is improper for a communist to remain outside the Party and impermissible to form an independent group. Such comrades have thereby created un-Bolshevik traditions for the party, hindered the possible growth of the party, prevented the building up of a far-wider mass influence for the policy of Communism. Their place from the very beginning was under the banner of the Party, they would have thereby strengthened the party and enabled it to pursue a more truly Bolshevik mass policy. These comrades put forward the state of inner-party life or the mistakes of local and provincial party organisations as their justification for remaining out of the party. The Central Committee declares that this is no valid justification. It assures these comrades from its own intimate knowledge of inner-party life, of our achievements and our mistakes that if they would have joined the party at the right moment they would have improved the party all round and prevented things which should never have happened. Every aspect of our Communist movement is decisively pointing to and conclusively proving the elementary organisational principle of the comintern that *no real, abiding communist work is possible except through the Communist Party*, not by remaining outside the party and never



against the party. *Party above all*—we call upon all our non-party comrades to recognise this and prove it by their deeds.

**ALL IN!**—into the party, is the fervent appeal of the Central Committee to all Communists who are not inside the party. We recognise it as our main task to facilitate their entry into the party by every means at our disposal, we expect every party member to heartily welcome them inside the party, we expect these comrades to work in a way as to earn the unquestioned confidence of us all.

The Central Committee calls upon all Communist to cease forthwith all carping criticism of each other, give up the hunt for imaginary deviations, and the delightful pastime of discovering the "mistakes" of others. In our struggle for party unity we must concentrate on finding out our point of agreement which will enable us to see our remaining differences in their true perspective. Let us, after this stage is reached, decide together and also separately whether our few remaining differences (political and otherwise) are of a type which could be discussed and decided upon inside the party in the usual way, or so fundamental and far-reaching as to make party unity impossible. The central committee does not desire to smother criticism either of itself or of the party as a whole or of other independent groups, but suggests the means whereby discussion could be fruitful. Everything must be discussed and all serious differences liquidated **BEFORE** party unity is achieved; but in all our discussions let us not lose sight of our aim—party unity—let us not degenerate into an endless debating society.

We all whole-heartedly accept the line of the Seventh World Congress the policy of united front, but we have been so far failing to effectively carry it out in practice. The Central Committee is working out and applying our new line to the concrete situation in India, it calls upon all non-party comrades to join up and help it in its new tasks. The Communist Party is the real builder and the most consistent supporter of united front. Unity on the party front will immediately accelerate the successful formation of the united front. Who dare deny this?

Our Spanish comrades have proved that a numerically small but united C.P. can successfully build up a broad-based united front;

our French comrades have demonstrated the immense potentialities of the united front movement; our German and Austrian comrades are showing us how to build up a united party and united front movement in conditions of terror and illegality; we have the heroic example before us of the model colonial party of our International, the Chinese C.P. which in conditions of unimaginable terror and against unheard of difficulties is building up a growing united front movement against the rapacious Japanese Imperialism and successfully defending Soviet-China. We communists have the most glorious revolutionary heritage which is being enriched from day to day by our brother parties; let us not lag behind but fulfil our Bolshevik role. We would be justifying ourselves before the communists of the whole world by establishing a united party and through it launching ourselves successfully on the path of the United Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front.

The Central Committee states that there are groups and parties with whom party unity is not *immediately* possible, but the successful working out of the united front line in collaboration with such groups would create conditions when party unity with them would be feasible and proper. The Central Committee declares that it works and will work for the aim of party unity with them as well and it can best be realised through our joint experience of the united front struggle.

A United Communist Party of India as the lever of building up the *United Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front* and through the successful experience of the united front struggle a still stronger C.P. worthy of its historical leaders and teachers, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Such is the prospect today, and it is a realisable prospect. Let us realise it, *all together*.

*Central Committee  
Communist Party of India,  
(Section of the Communist International)*

## Draft Election Platform\*

We are suggesting below drafts of the three election platforms. We hope they will become the basis of wide discussion.

We have not duplicated the demands unnecessarily. The distinctive demands of Communists are not likely to be adopted by candidates who are contesting the elections on the platform of Socialism and revolutionary Anti-Imperialism, nor are the demands of the latter likely to be accepted by the Indian National Congress (I.N.C.) as it is today. The concrete demands suggested in the platform for the I.N.C. must however be adopted by the Left candidates. The Left inside the I.N.C. should struggle to see that the Platform for the I.N.C. is not modified in the direction of Right compromise nor the concrete demands made vague, they should not let any of these demands be deleted but should add on to them other concrete demands embodying the immediate grievances of the toiling people.

### Draft Election Platform for Communist Candidates

1. For Workers and Peasants Soviet Republic.
2. Repeal of all Anti-National, Anti-Peasant and Anti-Working class laws.
3. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, State prisoners, Internees and Detenues.
4. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.
5. Withdrawal of the army of occupation from India, existing army and police to be replaced by arming the workers, peasants and all toilers.

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\*Published in "THE COMMUNIST", Central Organ of the Communist Party of India, of July 1936, pages 15-16

6. Abolition of the Native States, property of the Princes to be confiscated.

7. Repudiation of working class and peasant indebtedness.

8. Confiscation of large estates. Land to the Tillers of the soil.

9. Repudiation of Imperialist Debts.

10. Confiscation of British Capital in India.

11. Confiscation and Nationalisation of all key and large Industries, plantations and Banks.

12. Revolutionary fraternal support to the British working class in its struggle against British Capitalism.

13. Active opposition to Imperialist Wars.

14. Active support at all costs to the SOVIET UNION, the hope of the toilers of the World.

### **Draft Election Platform for Socialist and Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Candidates**

1. For Workers and Peasants Republic.

2. Repeal of all Anti-National, Anti-Peasant and Anti-Working-class laws.

3. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, State prisoners, Detenues and Internees.

4. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.

5. Withdrawal of the army of occupation from India, existing army and police to be replaced by arming the people.

6. Abolition of Native States, properties of the Princes to be confiscated.

7. Repudiation of working class and peasant indebtedness.

8. Confiscation of large estates. Land to the Tillers of the soil.

9. Repudiation of all Imperialist Debts.

10. Confiscation of British Capital in India.

11. Confiscation and Nationalisation of key and large Industries, plantations and Banks.

12. Revolutionary fraternal support to the British working class in its struggle against British Capitalism.

13. Active opposition to Imperialist Wars.

14. Active support to the SOVIET UNION, the hope of the toilers of the world.

**Draft Election Platform for I.N.C.**

1. For Complete National Independence. No compromise with British Imperialism, Wrecking the Slave Constitution.
2. Repeal of all Anti-National, Anti-Peasant and Anti-Working class laws.
3. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, Detenues, State prisoners and Internees.
4. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.
5. 50% reduction in military and police budget.
6. Democratic rights for State subjects, their representatives to be elected by the people.
7. Repeal of the Arms Act.
8. Immediate moratorium on all working class and peasant debts. Cancellation of 50 p.c. of their debts.
9. Compulsory legal rate of interest not to exceed 6 p.c.
10. No rent and revenue from uneconomic holdings. 50 p.c. reduction in rent and revenue on all holdings yielding net incomes of Rs.500/- or less. Steeply graduated income-tax on agricultural incomes exceeding Rs.500/- a year.
11. Irrigation through Elected Peasant Committees.
12. Free grazing ground from Government, and landlords, to be managed by Elected Peasant Committees.
13. Abolition and Penalisation of all illegal levies, exactions and forced labour.
14. Guaranteed minimum wages of Rs.30/- a month.
15. Eight hour day.
16. Maternity Benefit, Unemployment and Health Insurance at the cost of Employers and Government.
17. Unrestricted Right of workers to strike and picket.
18. No Reduction of wages. No fines. No retrenchment.
19. No forced leave. No ejection of workers from tenements during strikes.

## **Communist Party and the Coming Election**

The hideous British Imperialism is redecorating itself, with the unreal democratic tinsels of the new constitution, to hide the barbarous autocracy of its rule in India, to cover up its merciless exploitation of the Indian people. The Indian people see it all, realise its implications but British Imperialism by the ruthless use of all its powers is imposing its cruel will on us. The elections under the new constitution are coming, the various political parties are preparing to participate in the elections and win an electoral majority, to further the interests of the classes they represent and to advance the cause they champion.

### **Where does the Communist Party (C.P.) Stand?**

The Communist Party of India (C.P.I.), the party of the revolutionary working-class, the party of national and social revolution, the front-rank fighter against British Imperialism, declares that it regards wrecking the present slave constitution as its first and immediate task and that this can be done only through a wide spread and militant mass movement. The entire electoral policy and activity of the C.P.I. is designed to serve and is subordinate to this definite aim and major task.

### **Against Boycott of Elections**

The C.P. rejects the policy of boycotting the present elections as sectarianism, leading to isolation from the masses. The electoral campaign is carried on among the masses, the loyalist

reactionary parties will try to bamboozle the masses and lead them into the camp of Imperialism, the reformist parties will preach their cowardly creed of compromise. The policy of boycott allows all this to happen unchallenged, it makes agitation among the masses the monopoly of reaction and reformism; on the other hand by participating in the elections we can agitate the masses, propagate our policy among them, and win them over to our side—to revolution. By boycotting the elections we isolate ourselves from the masses and allow a free hand to our enemies and friends of Imperialism; by participating in the elections we can combat the pro-imperialist united front of the exploiters and build a mass basis for the United Anti-Imperialist People's Front.

The C.P.I. in rejecting at the present stage the slogan of boycott of elections states in the words of the second congress of the Communist International, "Boycotting the election or the parliament or leaving the parliament is permissible, chiefly when there is a possibility for an immediate transition to an armed fight for power"!

### **C.P. and Parliamentary Activity**

Beneath the surface of apparent full in the political movement a new mass upsurge is brewing. The long merciless exploitation of British Imperialism had already exhausted our national economy. The economic crisis therefore hurt us more severely than most of the other countries, it gave a staggering blow to our whole economy. The agrarian sector is the basis of our national economy and it is there that the accumulated effects of the crisis have begun to produce most critical results. The stage of the disintegration of our agrarian economy is over, the process of its collapse has begun. Collapsing agrarian life in a colonial agrarian country means unbearable distress of the peasantry, mass unemployment, and rapidly worsening conditions for all the toilers, acute agrarian and general discontent which can be fanned into the flames of agrarian and national revolution.

Regarding the above as the material background of our national life the C.P. declares that it is incorrect to hold that a mass movement is not possible today. A new mass movement is impending, we can have it—here and now—through our efforts.

The main purpose of the electoral activity of the C.P.I. is to develop and build the mass movement, based on the partial demands of the toiling masses, and for the destruction of the slave constitution Imperialist terror is suppressing every sign of mass activity, the C.P. shall use the legal opportunities provided by the elections and endeavour to transform the elections under the Imperialist constitution into a mass movement against this slave constitution itself, to turn the weapon of Imperialism against itself.

The C.P. holds mass activity to be primary and parliamentary activity to be auxiliary, its parliamentary activity is not a substitute for mass activity. In the present conditions of terror prevailing in our country parliamentary activity can become an effective means of building up, organising and developing a mass movement. Parliamentary activity is one front of our activity, not the whole of our activity. Our main emphasis is on the mass movement which alone can win in the partial demands of the toilers, destroy the slave constitution and lead us on to the goal of independence.

The communists shall contest the elections not because they have any illusions about this slave constitution, the C.P. considers the slave constitution worth only one thing—blowing it up. The communists enter the legislatures only for the purpose using them as platforms of agitation and for the purpose of helping in every way from inside the legislature the growth of a mass movement outside. The communists enter the legislatures to fight their political enemies face to face, to expose their reactionary policies and counter-revolutionary intrigues promptly on the spot, to popularise the partial demands of the people and the struggle against the slave constitution, to use the legislatures as the sounding-board for the call of national independence and socialism. Our aim in entering the legislatures is anti-imperialist agitation, anti-imperialist propaganda and anti-imperialist organisation.

### **C.P. and United Front for Elections**

The C.P.I. finally believes that an effective struggle against the slave constitution must be based on the policy of united front and



equally firmly insists that it should be an *anti-imperialist* united front and not a united front with pro-imperialist counter-revolutionary parties.

If the elections are to be successfully transformed into a large scale anti-imperialist mass mobilisation it is necessary that all the existing anti-imperialist organisations must function as a united team. We are giving below an outline sketch of the plan of united front for the elections:

We are discussing in another article the policy for the coming elections which the anti-imperialists inside the Indian National Congress (I.N.C.) should follow so as to make the congress a major unifying anti-imperialist political force. The C.P.I. shall actively support the Congress candidates against the loyalist Zamindar candidates with all the forces at its command. The communist speakers shall however, make clear their differences with the policy of the existing official leadership of the Congress—its compromising nature and class-collaborationist character, and state in a persuasive comradely manner the changes we desire before the Congress could become a real anti-imperialist organisation. Not to make our comradely criticism, suppress our independent views, and give unqualified support to the I.N.C. *as it is to-day* would be to strengthen reformism and extend its hold over the masses, it will not be building up the anti-imperialist united front, it will be throttling the united front with our own hands but with the mantram of united front on our lips.

The leading anti-imperialist parties inside the I.N.C. should formulate an independent election platform which should not suffer from the various limitations of the official Congress programme, be more clearly and emphatically progressive both as regards aims and major demands (we are suggesting elsewhere the draft of such a platform), they should set up candidates on their own platform after proper negotiations with the official Congress as regards seats etc., they should accept the Congress whip inside the legislatures, and during the elections they should actively support the official candidates just as the latter would be bound to support them. The Left too would stand as Congress candidates accepting the

official programme of the Congress (unless it contains something against the anti-imperialist creed—the official Congress platform has yet to be published) but they will also have an independent platform of their own.

In the labour constituencies the C.P.I. will do all it can to prevent the proletarian front being broken up through personal ambition or partisan rivalry. It shall support militant class-conscious rank and file workers irrespective of their party allegiance rather than individuals of non-working class origin. It will struggle to arrive at a mutually satisfactory arrangement as regards seats etc. on the principle that all the revolutionary currents of thought inside the working-class get proper representation. It will endeavour its utmost so that the proletarian vote is not split to the advantage of the direct agents of the employers and that the militants actively help each other to defeat the return of the employers' agents, veiled or open.

The C.P.I. will support independent anti-imperialist candidates against the reformists provided they have a clean record of past struggle.

Inside the legislatures communist will help to form a well-knit harmoniously functioning Anti-Imperialist Block whose objects would be to wreck the slave constitution of Imperialism, actively help the extra-parliamentary mass struggle, frustrate all attempts at a compromise with Imperialism etc. etc.

### **Through United Front for Elections Towards the Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front**

A properly conducted united front election campaign will not only mean a successful mass mobilisation against the slave constitution but it can become the beginning of a mass movement against Imperialism itself; out of the united front work for elections can arise the united front work for the Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front line, the particular can become the general, from an elementary stage, we can march on to a higher stage. This will happen not mechanically or automatically but through action. A properly conceived harmoniously worked united front election struggle will reveal the immense potentialities of the policy of

united front so that what looks like a familiar election pact will be revealed as a successful and effective political line of struggle; the actual experience of the united front campaign will restore the necessary mutual confidence, establish bonafides and subjectively prepare the different individual parties for a more vital and lasting united front agreement. The ground would be prepared for transforming the Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front from a current popular phrase into a serious political reality. To achieve this consummation will remain the conscious task of all Anti-Imperialists.

The actual outcome of all this will to a great extent depend upon the attitude of the I.N.C. for it is the dominant political force in our country and will naturally dominate the election campaign as well. Of great significance therefore would be the attitude of the present head of the National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, towards the policy of united front in general and united front for elections in particular. He should not find it difficult to support the line sketched out above for has he not himself stated that the Congress is not a political party but a mass movement? With this as his own premise he should not find it difficult to come to the conclusion that Congress 'discipline' should not be party discipline but the discipline of a movement i.e. that through it is necessary to pull up the reformist Right for its compromising manoeuvres (which disorganise and disrupt the movement and tend to its betrayal) yet it will be impermissible to deny an independent existence to the Anti-Imperialist left inside the I.N.C. for their policy is only more consciously Anti-Imperialist than that of the Congress as a whole and their line only tends to activise and solidify the whole movement in the direction of struggle. We communists shall enthusiastically welcome and wholeheartedly support all the efforts of Nehru, C.S.P. and the other Anti-Imperialist elements which are intended to advance the strength against slave constitution and build up the united front movement. Whatever the obstacles and difficulties we Communists shall pursue the path of united front patiently, persistently and actively for we know that is the path of struggle which will lead us to victory.

## **Transform The Elections into Mighty Anti-Imperialist Demonstrations**

*Communist Party's Call To Congress Rank and File.*

The time is drawing near when British Imperialism will foist its slave constitution on our country. In spite of the fact that the new constitution has been exposed as reactionary and retrogressive, in spite of the anger and resentment felt by the Indian people against this new scheme of "reforms," in spite of the fact that it has been condemned by all the political parties in India, imperialism is marching ahead to put it into operation and stifling all opposition to it by taking resort to repressive laws, emergency powers and other forms of imperialist terror. The new constitution not only keeps the economic and political stranglehold of British imperialism over India intact; the blood-stained claws of the hated oppressors of the Indian nation have sunk deeper into our body politic.

British Imperialism, faced with crisis ever increasing rivalry between capitalist powers, dwindling profits, race in armaments, catastrophe and war, seeks to buttress itself by intensifying its exploitation of the Indian people; it consolidates itself in this country; it organises the feudal traitors, the princes, the big landlords and a section of the capitalists against the popular forces in India. It perfects its war machinery to lead the world to another bloody bath; to bring death and disaster, ruin and annihilation to India and to the world. It helps Hitler and France

sometimes openly sometime in a clandestine manner; it makes itself the greatest bulwark of reaction, the foe of democracy and freedom, of socialism and national liberation.

India is at once the victim and the tool of British Imperialism. By attacking Imperialism in India, by breaking the shackles which bind us to the Imperialist system we shall not only regain the right to live freely in our own land; we shall destroy an evil which is dragging the entire world to ever greater misery, to ever greater oppression.

### **How to Smash the Slave Constitution ?**

Today the focal point of imperialist attack on India is the new constitution. To free ourselves from this new bondage should be the main plank of our political struggle.

To concentrate all our forces, to mobilise all our energy to fight the slave constitution, that is the task which confronts us. The struggle against the imperialist constitution should unite all the exploited classes, the workers, the peasants, the middle classes all those who want to free themselves from the bondage of misery and poverty, from the curses of unemployment and the increasing imperialist horror, i.e., all those millions whom the new constitution will crush and oppress further.

We will, therefore, utilise the electoral campaign to push forward our mass work, to rouse and organise the masses on the basis of their day to day grievances, to relate the struggle of the masses with the struggle against the constitution. Our aim should be not an electoral majority in the Councils and Assembly through flirting and manoeuvring with reactionary groups and individuals, but the pushing forward of the mass struggle against imperialism, the drawing in of ever-increasing numbers of the exploited and oppressed belonging to all the classes, the forming of a mighty anti-imperialist United National Front. This is the sole purpose for which we participate in the elections and go into the legislatures. Work in the elections and legislatures is auxiliary to the work outside the legislature, to mass struggle. We condemn those Rightist elements in the Indian National Congress leadership who want to substitute mass struggle by constitutional opposition and

thus convert Congress into a tame constitutional body. The constitution cannot be wrecked from inside the legislatures. For us wrecking the constitution can be achieved only by one way; the raising of the mass-struggle, the struggle of the workers, peasants and the middle classes to such a level that the functioning of the constitution becomes impossible, and the Indian people are better able to march forward towards the revolutionary capture of power.

We find, however, that instead of following this militant anti-imperialist policy, the rightist section of the Indian National Congress leadership wants to win the elections AT ANY COST. For this purpose resort is made to pacts with reactionaries (Nationalist party, Zaminders etc.); job hunters and self-seekers are in many places chosen as Congress candidates instead of militant anti-imperialist; proper campaign of anti-imperialist propaganda and agitation among the masses is not organised; resort is made to manoeuvring and arrangements with a few people at the top and worst of all the demands of the masses are overlooked, blurred and pushed in the background.

The election can become the occasion for rallying the masses provided their main specific demands are clearly formulated and put in the fore front of the election campaign. It is necessary to give a clear and unambiguous lead with regard to the demands of workers, peasants and the middle classes. The agrarian situation in the country is so acute that only an agrarian revolution can solve the problem of the peasantry. But in order to unite all the anti-imperialist forces we are ready to form united front on the basis of 50% reduction of rent and debt, stoppage of all auction and ejection, permanent tenancy rights to all tenants etc., and thus correlate the fight for peasant demands with the fight against the constitution. Instead of clearly putting these demands and such other demands for workers as 30 rupees minimum wage, the Congress Election Manifesto has incorporated the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights which is vague and ambiguous on most points. In the Congress electoral campaign even the Karachi resolution is hardly ever mentioned. Mass demands are not popularised, the peasants, the workers, the town poor are not

made to feel the living reality of the fight for independence. The rightists in the Congress are doing their best not to raise sharply the demands of the peasants in the electoral campaign. Everywhere in India their effort is to make pacts with landlords and other reactionary elements. In this way, step by step they are preparing the country for constitutionalism, acceptance of ministry, giving up of the mass struggle against imperialism. This is the road to defeat and capitulation, the road to slavery and subjection. We cannot go along this road.

What is the other alternative? The Communist Party of India, the party of the revolutionary working-class, puts before the Indian people, before all the anti-imperialists the alternative of turning the forthcoming election into big anti-government demonstrations by uniting all the anti-imperialist elements in the country, inside and outside the Indian National Congress, by forming a Joint National Front against Imperialism on the basis of minimum popular demands: we want to forge a unity which shall be able to resist and to fight back the Imperialist offensive against our people.

But for us the only basis of unity, the only method of forming this united front, is the method of struggle for the redress of the most crying grievances of the masses, to bring forward sharply the class-demands of all the exploited and all the oppressed, to fight and to struggle for their immediate redress; not to fetter our movements on its revolutionary path by an abstract adherence to the so called peaceful mass actions (vide Congress Manifesto) but to use the most appropriate, the most effective and the most decisive method and weapon in our struggle; to raise ever higher the level of political understanding of the masses, thus drawn into fight against imperialism; to lead them on to the goal of revolutionary overthrow of this hated Government of foreign exploiters—such is the line which our party places before you, such is the line which our party is pursuing in India.

### **United Front Election Platform**

The Communist Party of India places before you the following immediate demands, which form a basis of unity of all the

Anti-Imperialists in the country, and on the basis of which our electoral campaign should be organised :

1. For Complete National Independence. No compromise with British Imperialism. Wrecking the Slave Constitution.
2. Repeal of all anti-national, anti-peasant and anti-working class laws.
3. Unconditional release of all political prisoners, Detenues, State prisoners and Internees.
4. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.
5. 50% reduction in military and police budget.
6. Democratic rights for State subjects, their representatives to be elected by the people.
7. Repeal of the Arms Act.
8. Immediate moratorium on all working class and peasant debts. Cancellation of 50% of debts.
9. Compulsory legal rate of interest not to exceed 6%.
10. No rent and revenue from uneconomic holdings. 50% reduction in rent and revenue on all holdings yielding not incomes of 500 rupees or less. Steeply graduated income-tax on all agricultural incomes exceeding Rs. 500 a year.
11. Irrigation through elected Peasant Committees.
12. Free grazing grounds from Government and landlords to be managed by Elected Peasant Committees.
13. Abolition and Penalisation of all illegal levies, exactions and forced labour.
14. Guaranteed minimum wages of Rs.30/- a month.
15. Eight hours day.
16. Maternity benefit, Unemployment and Health Insurance at the cost of employers and Government.
17. Unrestricted right of workers to strike and picket.
18. No reduction of wages. No fines. No rentrenchment.
19. No forced leave. No ejection of workers from tenements during strikes.

On the basis of these demands it will be possible for us to draw all the various sections of the anti-imperialist masses into



struggle, to transform every struggle into an on-slaught against imperialism and to make an attack upon imperialism from all sides thus bringing our fight for national emancipation on to a higher level.

While fighting for these elementary rights of the people the Communist Party will explain to the masses that there can be no final solution of the problems that face them except with the establishment of a Soviet Hindustan. That exploitation and its concomitant unemployment, misery and starvation can become things of past only in a Soviet regime. That it is only with the establishment of Soviets that the masses will have the necessary power to dothrone exploitation for ever and bring real freedom to the masses.

The present stage of our struggle demands that we unite all the elements which suffer under imperialism into one front; the danger to India to the international movement for peace and democracy is too great for us to think of any thing but a United Front. We maintain the independence of our organisation, but we are prepared to fight in the front rank with other anti-imperialists for the overthrow of Imperialism.

### **Constituent Assembly Against the Slave Constitution**

Against imperialism's slave constitution we put forward the democratic slogan of the Constituent Assembly, not in a formal manner, not as something which imperialism might grant to us but something which come into existence as a result of fierce struggle against imperialism. The demand for Constituent Assembly should ring from every political platform in India; it should be our positive alternative to the, present scheme of constitutional changes. It should not become like it has in the hands of Right Wing Congress leaders a lifeless formula, a convenient phrase to demand from imperialism the calling of an enlarged Round Table Conference in India, a slogan accepted to appease the Left Wing. For us it is the main United Front slogan, the main political demand, round which a living unity of all the democratic forces can be achieved. Further, we don't ask for a Constituent Assembly

from the British Government, we fight for it, we strive to create enough revolutionary sanctions in the country to be able to convene it in spite of imperialist opposition; the fight for the realisation of the slogan of Constituent Assembly simultaneously means a fight for the destruction of Imperialist state machinery.

The party of the Revolution Working Class, the Communist Party of India, the front rank fighter in the anti-imperialist struggle calls for a United Front of all anti-imperialist elements at the next elections; it calls upon all the left elements to use the election platform for mobilising all the oppressed masses on the basis of their demands, to raise their anti-imperialist consciousness to a higher level and thus transform the election campaign into mighty demonstrations of all the anti-imperialist masses. The Communist Party of India will support all the genuinely left elements in their electoral campaign; the Communist Party shall support the Indian National Congress candidates against the reactionaries. We will nonetheless point out how the Congress has not clearly formulated the demands of the exploited masses, how an anti-imperialist approach to the elections should exclude all manoeuvres with the reactionaries and how the rightist elements in the Congress are making elections a tame affair only having their eyes upon constitutional majorities. We will point out the changes that we demand before the Congress could become a real anti-imperialist organisation. Doing all this we will strive our best to stampede the elections with votes in favour of the Congress candidates to defeat the loyalists and reactionaries. We shall strive to make the electoral campaign the beginning of a new, of a mighty onslaught on the enemy.

We realise the responsibility for anti-imperialist movement, for the fate of our people, and realising this to work with renewed ardour and confidence to achieve unity in the anti-imperialist movement. The Communist Party of India, therefore, offers its hand to all the anti-imperialist fighters in the cause of India's freedom, it calls upon them to build a strong United National Front against Imperialism. The threat of an imperialist war, the growth of fascism, the danger to the existence of the workers'

fatherland, the Soviet Union, menaces the toiling people of India from without, the ever-increasing exploitation of the masses, the intensified terror of imperialism, menaces our Motherland from within. There is no time to lose!

Transform the elections into a weapon to forge an anti-imperialist United Front!

Form the United National Front against Imperialism!

Smash the New Constitution!

For a Constituent Assembly and a Democratic Republic!

**Inquilab Zindabad!**

5th December, 1936

CENTRAL COMMITTEE,  
**Communist Party of India**  
(Section of the Communist International)

## **Release All Political Prisoners!**

***RELEASE ALL FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM FROM  
THE HELL OF IMPERIAL JAIL!  
THE STRUGGLE FOR THEIR RELEASE IS PART OF  
THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM!***

*There are* 82 State prisoners under Reg. III already detained or interned for an aggregate of 487 years; 13 detained over 10 years. 46 over 4 years.

*There are* over 3500 detenus in Bengal alone, *without trial and without hope of release*, without proper medical treatment, subject to police inquisition, driven by intimidation and fear for their families to suicide and insanity.

*There are* hundreds of working-class leaders serving out vicious sentences merely for telling the workers that British Imperialism exploits them. *This is Sedition.*

*There are* hundreds of political prisoners exiled in the most barbarous conditions to the Andamans, away from civilization and proper medical aid, a penal settlement that was condemned long ago as unfit even for the lowest type of criminal.

*There are* tens of thousands of volunteers jailed under the ordinances devised by imperialism to suppress seditious opposition to British Law and Order.

*There are* daily arrests and long sentences for the publication of articles which in any way call for active opposition to the Government.

*THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA*, therefore, puts forward in the present stage of the struggle against imperialist exploitation and for national liberation the slogans:

**Release all Fighters for Freedom. Withdraw the ordinances.**

We do not make a prayer, promising future co-operation or denying that these prisoners were guilty of sedition. On the contrary we proclaim that *every one of us is Guilty of Sedition*

*and will always be so, in so far as we are radically opposed to imperialism, and believe that British exploitation, with its fascist method, saps the very roots of our national well-being and strikes at the very roots of our civil liberties.*

**WE DEMAND THE RELEASE OF ALL SEDITIONISTS, ALL FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM !  
RETURN THE FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM TO THE RANKS OF THE STRUGGLE !!**

*The fight for the political prisoners is a fight for democracy and an exposure of the slave constitution : British Imperialism economically and politically unstable is forcing a slave constitution upon us, using for this purpose fascist suppression of speech, assembly and organization. Whoever shows militant opposition finds himself in jail; all opposition is sedition. Therefore, we declare that we, who are unalterably opposed to the New Constitution, make common cause with all those seditionists, who with or without trial are rotting in imperialist jails.*

The police and the magistrate are everywhere combining with "loyal" ministers to defeat anti-imperialist candidates. In Calcutta, in the Punjab and elsewhere, the Security Act is being used to prohibit meetings, to harass and intern all working-class leaders. The Press Act is used to stifle all anti-Government propaganda. Wherever opposition is expressed, it is branded SEDITION and penalized so that daily the number of political prisoners is being swelled.

### **Fight for Political Prisoners and Civil Liberty Expose the Election Farce**

*The anti-imperialist struggle must embrace all fighters for FREEDOM. The C.P.I., in putting forward this demand, makes no distinction of party or creed. Whoever is a seditionist a fighter for freedom and a convinced anti-imperialist, for him we demand release from the restrictions of imperial brutality. We are aware that the issues involved in the national struggle are becoming clarified, the barriers against Unity are daily being broken down,*

all anti-imperialists are coming to realize that the prime need at the moment is *a united struggle with a mass basis against British Imperialism*. In the face of this realization all minor differences can be accommodated. The C.P.I. therefore calls upon the whole Nation to come forward and fight for the urgent and *immediate realisation of* :

**The Anti-imperialist peoples Front of all Seditiousists,  
A Front of all opposed to imperialist repression,  
A Front for Democratic Rights and Civil Liberty  
A Front for the release of all fighters for freedom**

There is no time to lose, the MEERUT TRIALS of tomorrow are being hatched by the Imperialist watch dogs to crush all opposition. Let us make a quick move come out in your millions and demand with one thundering voice.

**Down with the fascist torture and police atrocities!  
Wreck the constitution and expose the elections!  
Return the seditiousists to the anti-imperial ranks!  
Forward to the United National Front!**

## **Imperialism Prepares For War**

**WAR on WOMEN and CHILDREN. WAR on FELLOW-MEN. WAR to SWELL PROFIT**

The stage is set for another bloody imperialist war, billions are being spent on arms since capitalism can only cover up its economic and social contradictions by resort to war. Only so can it curb the uprising forces of production and secure profitable markets.

**FOR THE SAKE OF IMPERIAL PROFITS, MILLIONS MUST DIE**

They have strangled the League and killed Collective Security. To the starving they give, not bread but gas-masks, whilst those

who demand peace and expose the militarists are thrown mercilessly into jails and concentration camps.

**Let us also Prepare for war, War for National Liberation.  
War to overthrow imperialism, War to end exploitation**

In the face of this impending war and the blood-bath that imperialism is preparing for us the *Communist Party of India* calls upon all those who are fighting for the overthrow of British Imperialism to *demand the intensification of the fight for peace*. The masses in every country desire peace because they get all the misery and none of the profits out of the war. Why should we die to increase the rich-man's dividends? We colonial people in particular can have nothing to do with any imperialist war—a war of robbery, a war to increase the oppression of subject races, a war to crush freedom and democracy all over the world, a war of Fascist aggression against Russia—the bulwark of world revolution and the fortress of the toilers and oppressed nationalities of the world.

The attitude taken up by the British Imperialists towards Manchuria, Abyssinia and Spain make clear their inherent sympathy for Fascist aggression and Imperialist robbery. That being so, we declare that our opposition to fascism and war, to the attack on the USSR and the small democratic states is a part and parcel of our fight against British Imperialism and its exploitation of the Indian masses. Our position vis-a-vis imperialism is clear; we are opposed to the whole system and all its manifestations of fascism which can only lead to war and further exploitation of the subject people.

But since war is inevitable in the present capitalist world, mere refusal to fight is not enough. At the moment when the capitalist rulers are confused and their strength dissipated by the needs of war, we must take *direct action*.

**Refuse to Transport Troops or supplies and Sabotage  
Recruitment ■ Corrupt the Army and Police and Paralyse the  
war administration ■ Turn Boycotts into Strikes and Strikes**

**into armed Struggle ■ Strike at the Roots of Imperialism by an Attack in the Rear ■ Make India the Weakest Link in the Imperial War Strategy ■ Strike for National Liberation and Complete Independence.**

This demands long and careful preparation. We cannot wait until the hour strikes for the clash of imperial forces. We must start now. The Communist Party of India, therefore, calls upon all fighters for freedom to immediately demand *the intensification of the fight for independence*. We are no cowards. The Civil Disobedience Movement proved the heroism of our rank and file. If it failed it did so because it failed to pass on to the next higher stage of the struggle, due to the lack of co-ordination and organisation, due to the lack of a nationwide mass basis with concrete mass demands and finally due to the betrayal by those whose vested interests were threatened by the rising anti-imperialist fervour.

The first pre-requisite for the intensification of the struggle for independence is that we formulate a clear fighting programme based on mass demands, and free ourselves from *bureaucratic leadership* whose vested interests will make them bitterly oppose the fight to turn the imperialist war into a war for freedom, since this fight will curtail their profit just as much as it hurts the imperialists.

The second pre-requisite is that we realise that the present fight for freedom, and still more the fight in the impending war situation, can never be effective until our anti-imperialist front embraces all those who are willing and able to strike wholeheartedly against imperialism. The key need at the moment is, therefore, to realise the co-ordination and unity of all anti-imperialist elements through collective affiliation of the workers, peasants, and youth organisations to the Congress, so that the transport workers and the steel producers, key-industry workers and the miners, peasants and youths will help, and be helped in a united struggle to make really effective the vital blow at imperialism.



*Transforms the elections into mighty Anti-Imperialist. . . 275*

**Demand the Democratisation of the Congress—Down with Bureaucratic Leadership.**

**Demand the Collective Affiliation of all Anti-Imperialist organisations.**

**Make the Congress an Expression of the Peoples Desire for Complete Independence.**

**Transform the Congress into a Real Anti-Imperialist Peoples Front.**

**Make the Anti-Imperialist Peoples Front the Army of the War for Freedom.**

**Turn the Imperialist War into a War for National Liberation.**

**Make India the Weakest Link in the Imperial War Strategy.**

**Down with War preparations—Down with Fascist Aggression.**

**Defend the Bulwark of Peace and Democracy the USSR.**

# The Road To Power

*An analysis of some facts and factors towards unity of the revolutionary movement.*

## I The New Constitution And The United National Front

### **An Analysis of The Government of India Act 1935**

With the advent of the New Constitution much controversy is created round the implication of this measure for the peoples of India. Prolonged discussion has been taking place during the last few months on the question of the acceptance or non-acceptance of office on the one hand, while on the other it is proposed that the Constitution should be wrecked by entrance into the Legislatures and obstructing its internal working. We propose therefore to expose the futility of the discussion believing that it is high time the realities of the situation were faced. This we propose to do by an analysis of the structure and content of the New Constitution itself, leaving this to speak for itself. What are the salient characteristic of this measure?

#### **I. Conservation of Feudal Despotism in the Native States for the purpose of strengthening the hold of British Imperialism on India.**

The condition on which States agree to accede to Federation is to be entirely a matter between the Crown, its representative the

Governor-General and the Ruler of each State. (Sections 5, 6, 34-d, 285, 286, 139, 145, 146, 147, and 148.)

The Federal Government is to have no say in the terms of accession of any State to the Federation nor in the relationship of the Crown to the States or in determining the contribution of States to the Revenue of the Federation, etc. All existing rights and privileges accorded to the Ruler of a State in the past by treaties with the Crown are to be guaranteed against any interference by the Federal Government.

All loans, payments, etc. owed by any State to the Government of India before the passing of the Act will be received by the Crown to dispose of as it thinks fit. It may, e.g., remit the whole or part of any such debts incurred by any Ruler of Native States.

All corporations within a Federal State shall be exempted from taxation for a period of ten years. The Ruler may at the end of that period elect to pay a contribution to the Revenues of the Federation in lieu of such a tax in which case the Federation may not call for any information of returns from any corporation in the State for the purpose of determining the amount of such contribution. All payments and allowances to former Rulers or their families will be borne by the Federation. All expenses incurred in the relationships of the Crown with a Native State are to be borne by the Federation, the latter to have no power of interference in the conduct of such relationships. The Crown Representative, for example, may order military forces to be sent into the Native State should he decide that this is necessary for the "due discharge of his functions" i.e., should the people be provoked into revolt against the despotism of a Native Ruler. The cost of such military operations is to be borne by the Federation. (Sec. 286.)

As regards Representation of Federated States in the Council of State: Fifty-two seats out of a total of 260 are reserved for this purpose. The members are to be chosen by the State Rulers as their representative. The Federal Government will not come into being unless and until a sufficient number of Native States have acceded to secure that proportion. It should moreover be pointed out that 52 is the minimum only of representatives of the Native

States. Provision is made for a maximum proportion of 104 seats for Native States to the 150 seats allocated to the elected representatives of British India (including the Government nominees and Anglo-Indians).

It is expected by the above means to secure a powerful lever against any attempt at obstruction in the Council of State. Not that there is likely to be any very serious opposition to Imperialism in that quarter! Let us see how it is going to be constituted. In addition to the 52 Indian States' representatives there will be 150 "elected" members, of which 134 will be elected on a communal basis prescribed by order in council. It is not expected that the franchise will extend to more than one hundred and fifty thousand voters for the whole of British India including Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

No act can of course become law which has not passed through this chamber.

This principle of mothering the privileged classes is scarcely less apparent in the Federal Assembly where the proportion of Labour representatives to the total number of seats will be 10 to 375. Election to this Chamber will be by members of the Provincial Assemblies. It has been estimated by Messrs Eddy and Lawson, I.C.S., that the franchise for the Provincial Assemblies will extend to 14 p.c. of the total population. This figure includes Labour Organisations and obscures the disproportionate voting power of the various sections of the electorate. Moreover, the facts noted above with regard to the Federal Chambers must be recalled in assessing the value of this estimate.

The qualifications for voting will be mainly (a) Property ownership and (b) Literacy.

Other conditions varying according to different provinces. Thus the great masses of the people of India, nine hundred out of every thousand, approximately, are to be represented as follows in the Legislatures under the New Constitution.

In the Council of State...Not represented at all.

In the Federal Assembly...Between 2.7p.c. and 4 p.c. of the total number of seats these being the Labour Representatives.

In the Prov. Legis. Council.....Not represented at all....

In the Prov. Assemblies.....2.4 p.c. of the total number of seats. So much for the representative character of the New Constitution.

***How far can the Federal and Provincial Chambers, even constituted as they are, be regarded as effective and responsible Governing Bodies.***

We now come to the central and principal characteristic of the Government of India Act, the basic principle on which the New Constitution is founded, the purpose for which it was devised, namely, the assertion of Imperialist domination over the entire Indian economy as the prelude to the intensified exploitation of its people and its resources. Provisions within the Act to secure this end can be grouped under three heads.

**(A) Financial; (B) Legislative; (C) Administrative**

There are first one or two general provisions covering all three.

1. Nothing in this Act shall be taken to affect the Power of the British Parliament to legislate for British India or any part thereof. (Sec. 110)

2. The previous sanction of the Governor-General acting in his discretion, i.e., subject to the control only of the Secretary of State (Sec. 14 & 11), is required before any Bill can be introduced into either Chamber of the Federal Legislature, which seeks to repeal, amend, or is repugnant to, any Act of Parliament which extends to British India, i.e., no change can be effected in the constitution by the Legislatures. Subject to certain provisions they may, however, pass resolutions recommending amendments, (not less than ten years hence), on matters affecting the extension of the franchise, method of choosing and election of members of the Legislatures (Sec. 308) and such a resolution can only be moved by a minister on behalf of the Council of ministers (These are chosen and summoned by the G.G. in his discretion. Sec.9). It must not seek to vary the proportion of seats between the councils and the Assemblies or between British India Members, and Federal State Members, etc. If all these conditions are fulfilled such a resolution may be forwarded to the King with the G.G.'s recommendations

on the subject and may then be submitted to both Houses of Parliament.

3. The previous sanction of the Governor-General is required before any Bill can be introduced into either house which bears any relation to matters in which the G.G. is to act in his discretion or to the G.G.'s especial responsibilities, that is, in which he is subject only to the control of the Secretary of State. (Sec.11, 12, 110, etc.) This covers Defence, Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, etc. ecclesiastical, Foreign relations, Relation with Native States, Safeguarding the Financial Stability and Credit of the Federal Government, Prevention of any grave menace to the security and Tranquility of India.

Safeguarding the legitimate interests of minorities, Members of Public services and their dependents.

Prevention of "discriminating treatment" towards British subjects or British Companies domiciled or incorporated in U.K. or against British goods imported into British India. Protection of the Rights and Dignity of the Ruler of Indian States. Similar conditions to the above prevail in the Provincial Legislatures with respect to matters in which the provincial Governors are required to act "in their discretion" or exercise "their special responsibilities". These cover the same ground as the above (Sec.52.) Besides the preservation of peace and tranquility there is the additional clause combating the activities of any person which in the opinion of the Governor are intended to overthrow the Government. (We seem to enjoy some cognition in this Act after all.) It is hardly necessary to point out that one implication amongst many of the above is that it is beyond the power of any Legislature to repeal any of the existing repressive legislation—Press Acts etc. (Sec. 108).

With this brief summary of the General provision governing the three heads referred to above—Finance, Legislation and Administration, we may proceed to a consideration of the particulars under each head.

### *1. Finance, Dictatorship of British Finance Capital.*

The annual Budget of the Federation shall be placed before both Chambers of the Federal Legislature, the Provincial Budgets before the Provincial Chambers. They will not however have any

power to vote on any of the following items. They may only be discussed.

a. Salary and allowances of the G.G. (Sec. 250, 800, p.a.) and all other expenditure relating to his office. In the provinces the same applies to the Governors.

b. Debt charges for which the Federation is due. The same applies to the provinces. (The National debt amounts to 101 crores. This figure does not include Provident Fund, P.O. Savings Bank Certificates, etc., held in India and amounting to 225 crores.)

c. Salaries, allowances and pensions of judges of the Federal Courts and High Courts, of the ministers, of the Financial advisers (appointed by the G.G.) of the Advocate General, of the Chief Commissioner, of the staff of the Financial advisers (Sec. 11 seq. and Sec. 232 seq).

d. Expenditure with respect to Defences, Ecclesiastical affairs, Foreign relations, Tribal areas and "excluded areas", Native States.

e. Sums required to satisfy the judgments of any courts of Tribunal.

f. Any other expenditure which the G.G. (or the G. in the case of provinces) shall decide should be included under this heading "Expenditure charged on the Revenues".

In addition to the above items it is outside the capacity of the Legislature to determine the amount of expenditure in connection with matters in which the G.G. or the P.G. as the case may be, is required to act "in his discretion or which are his special responsibilities". (see above.). This virtually excludes control by the legislatures of the pay of all members of the I.C.S., Police and public services with the exception of the clerks and peons.

Should either of the Chambers refuse to pass the G.G's orders or demands for grants in respect of any of the above matters, he has power to "authorise such expenditure as seems to him necessary". Should any expenditure "becomes necessary" during any financial year which is not in the Budget, "supplementary Grants" may be demanded.

With regard to Tariffs the power of the Legislatures is similarly restricted by the "special responsibility" to prevent discrimination against British goods, British companies and British capital imported into India. Under section 153 no Bill or amendment affecting the coinage or currency of the Federation or the function of constitution of the Reserve Bank of India or imposing any tax *Regulating* the borrowing of money shall be introduced into either chamber without the sanction of the G.G. (Sec. 37, 82). Finally the G.G. shall act in his discretion \*subject only to the control of the Secretary of State with respect to the following matters.

(a). Appointment and removal from office of the Governor and Deputy Governors of the Reserve Bank of India, approval of their salaries and allowances, the fixing of their terms of office.

(b). The appointment of the officiating Governor and Deputy Governors of the Bank.

(c). The supercession of the Central Board of the Bank and any action consequent thereon.

(d). The Liquidation of the Bank.

It will thus be seen that apart from the fact that the Legislatures, whether Federal or Provincial, control only a fraction of their respective budgets the imperial power exercises complete and unchallenged dominion over the whole credit and financial machinery and resources of the country. Its debts, its currency, exchange ratio, its tariffs, the distribution and development of its resources being determined by the dictates of British Finance Capital. Its Revenue and its expenditure are to be determined not by the taxable capacity of its people but by the self same dictates. Its industry, trade and commerce and in consequence the derivable revenue therefrom are to be subject to the prior claims of British Trading interests.

*What does this mean for the workers and peasantry in the Provinces?*

\* Original Pages from 9 to 16 were not available in the file copy of this document in P.C. Joshi's archives on contemporary India, New Delhi.



The provinces will have effective control of roughly only twenty-five per cent of their Revenues (The Federation an indefinite fraction). They will be unable to retrench expenditure on the remaining 75 p.c. since this is under the control of the Governors "in their discretion". They may effect some economies by reducing the salaries and allowances of members; (not listeners, and for the inferior grades "of Government servants some clerks, etc"). They must reduce expenditure on Education, Public Health, Sanitation and the like. But any increase in votable revenue can only be obtained by increasing taxation, a burden which must inevitably fall on the peasantry of the agricultural provinces and on the workers in the form of reduction of wages in the industrial provinces. This was even admitted the other day by Sir Homy Mody of all people. Commenting on the Niemeyer Report he is reported to have said, "Most of the provinces will be living from hand to mouth for the next few years. That is implicit in the financial position of the country. I have repeatedly pointed out that balanced budgets and high credit in international markets can by no means be regarded as reflecting the true position of the country. Taxation is at a high level, agriculture and industry are languishing and the spectre of unemployment is stalking the land. It is a depressing outlook". (Why does he not go on to point out how and why high credit and balanced budgets are advantageous to British Imperialism?) In conclusion he says, "I hope Sir Otto Niemeyer will recognise that keeping the provinces alive by spoon feeding from the centre and the centre alive by withholding income-tax from the provinces is at best an expedient and means no more than a feat of accountancy. Agricultural provinces in particular will soon have to face the realities of the situation and decide whether they will tap fresh sources of Revenue, and lay their hands upon Agricultural income and the like." (Meanwhile the outside world is confronted with the spectacle of Inter-provincial squabbles over their respective shares of Federal revenue, with the mother country as usual acting as benevolent arbitrator.)

*Herein then lies the menace to the standard of the already impoverished workers and peasantry.*

The Imperial Power seeks recovery from the chronic crisis of capitalism by intensifying its exploitation of India. The Indian bourgeoisie repressed and obstructed by Imperialist Domination seeks to recoup itself at the expense of the workers and peasants in the economic sphere while in the political sphere it seeks to use the reviving struggle of the masses against Imperialism in order that they may monopolise or, failing that, increase their share in the exploitation of the workers and peasants, by forcing concessions from the British Government. Before leaving the subject of Finance reference must be made to the Railways.

Railways (representing 60 per cent of the Government of India debt) are to be controlled by a Railway Authority consisting of seven members, three of whom are to be appointed by the Governor-General. The appointments are to be subject to the control of the Secretary of State. The control of the Federal Government is restricted to giving instructions on questions of policy. It will be seen from Sec. 183 Sub-Sec. 4 that the Governor-General in effect exercises complete control over the Railway Authority. Of further significance for the railway workers especially is the fact that the Railway Authority is responsible to no one in the matter of wages, etc. Its business is to make the Railway pay.

The success of Niemeyer's financial proposal as he admits himself, must largely depend on the improvement in the Railway finances. (Sec. 30 and 11(2) of the Niemeyer Report). "Thorough-going overhaul of Railway expenditure". Railway Workers' Unions, should take full note of this and prepare to act accordingly.

**Note:-** It has been variously estimated that the total cost to India of giving effect to those "changes" in the Constitution, i.e., cost of erecting a whole new boureaucratic superstructure, counsellors, Council of Ministers, its Secretariat, offices staff, etc., (all of which lies outside the control of the Legislatures) together with the loss of Revenue involved will alone amount to between ten and twenty crores of rupees. This is merely an additional burden on the budget, however, and is quite apart from

the ruinous effects on India's Finances, Commerce and Industry, which will continue.

*Legislation: Powers of Legislatures to legislate fictitious. Dictatorship of British Raj.*

In this connection the same restrictions apply with respect to matters in which the Governor General or the Governor of a Province, as the case may be, is required to act in his discretion or to meet his special responsibilities, i. e., outside the control of the Legislatures as has already been referred to (See above and Sec. 11, 12, 14, 52, 110, 111 seq). No Bill *affecting* these matters may be introduced without the previous consent of the G.G. or the Governors as the case may be to any of the Legislatures. The Governor-General or the Governors may in their discretion refuse their consent to any Bill in the King's name or return the Bill for reconsideration whether in whole or in part or he may reserve the Bill for the King's assent.

A Bill assented to by Governor-General or the Governor may, however, within a year of such assent being given, be disallowed by the King, in which case it shall become null and void (See Sec. 32, 75, 76, 77).

The rules regarding introduction of Bills (Sec. 30, 73,) are as follows: A Bill pending in the Council of State or the Legislative Councils shall not lapse on a dissolution of the Assembly (Federal or Provincial as the case may be). But a Bill pending in the Assembly, or in the Council after being passed by the Assembly shall lapse on the dissolution of the Assembly. The Governor-General and the Governors have power to dissolve the Assemblies "in their discretion" (Sec. 19, 62 ).

Thus a Bill introduced into the Assembly would automatically lapse should the Governor-General or the Governor as the case may be decide to dissolve the Assembly. On the other hand refusal by the Assembly to pass a Bill introduced by the Council may lead to the dissolution of the Assembly and the re-election of another, but the new Assembly would still be faced with the same Bill.

In addition to all those matters which lie beyond the control of the Legislature to legislate referred to above (Sec. 11, 12, 14, 52,

110, etc.) the Governor-General and the Governors may make rules regulating or entirely prohibiting discussion or asking of questions on certain matters which are their "special responsibility" (Sec. 34, 84.)

If the Governor-General at any time considers legislation necessary to enable him to discharge those functions which he is to exercise in his discretion or which are his special responsibility (Defence, Foreign relations, Prevention of any grave menace to peace and Safeguarding Financial stability and credit of the country, Safeguarding of British interest etc. etc. sec. 11, 12 and Sec. 99-121) he may either:

a. Submit to the Legislature the draft of a Bill containing such provisions as he considers the circumstances appear to demand, requiring its enactment within one month.

b. "Enact forthwith" such a Bill (Sec. 44 ).

c. "Promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him to require" (This is subject in certain cases to instructions from the King) Sec. 42, 43.

d. "If at any time the G.G. is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the Federation cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Act he may by proclamation assume to himself all or any of the powers" vested in or exercisable by any Federable Body or Authority". (Sec. 45). He may thus suspend the constitution and take such steps as may be necessary to carry on the King's Government. Such a proclamation shall be rectified by the House of Commons and the House of Lords and may continue to be in force for three years at the end of which time a "Revised Constitution Act" shall be brought into force.

Should such a situation as that described above arise in any particular province the P.G.s have power to act in any of the ways described above.....a.b.c.d. (Sec. 88, 89, 90, 93 ).

*C. Administration—Executive power not responsible to the Legislatures.*

Enough has perhaps already been said to show how the executive power has been divorced from any control by or financial dependence on the Legislatures, though reference must

be made to the section of the Act which specifically secures this. The Joint Parliamentary Committee enunciated this principle as of "First importance," "We have no wish to underrate the Legislative function but the Executive function is of overriding importance... The Principle of the Executive Independence should be reinforced." etc.etc.

Thus recruitment to the Army, Navy, Air Force, I.C.S., I.M.S., Police, Judges, all posts connected with any functions which the G.G. is required to exercise in his discretion is reserved to the King, the Secretary of State, the G.G. and the Pr. G.s in accordance with Sec. 8 and part 9 and 10 of the Act. The pay leave privileges, etc., of members of those services are outside the control of the Federal or Provincial Legislatures. Nor may the number of "Reserved posts" which he may deem it necessary to establish be reduced by them. (Sec. 244-246). While the Federation is to bear the whole cost of Administration including the Indian Establishment in England and the Imperial Forces in India it is precluded from determining the cost of prescribing the pay, condition of service, leave, pensions, privileges, of "its" executive officers appointed by the Secretary of State (see note p.20).

To sum up then the conclusion of the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report is amply justified in describing the Constitution Act as "a step for which there is no historical precedent"....."we shall do well to discard theories and analogies". Any theory of jurisprudence or analogy from Constitutional Law must necessarily be inimical to an Autocratic Dictatorship masquerading in "legal" and "constitutional" forms, each or all of which can be repudiated at will. It will be seen that the New Constitution offers an impenetrable series of fortified barriers for securing the economic and political dominion of the paramount power, and the "rights and privileges" of the dominant race.

And yet there are those who profess to lead the Indian National Struggle, who say, we will enter the Legislatures and obstruct the working of the Constitution". "We shall refuse to accept Offices" Dear! Dear! What a blow this will be! Whatever will the Secretary of State, the Governor-General and the Governors do

without them? What pathos! Can it be that the great Indian Struggle for Independence has reached its climax in such childish petulance? Is it necessary to point out that with a "Constitution" like this, it does not make the smallest difference whether anyone accepts offices or not? Every single member of the Council and Assemblies might resign in a body but the Constitution would still function, the "Law" continues to be administered. Nor is there within the impregnable framework of the Constitution any prospect of "gradual reform" but only the general economic strangulation. The Constitution is proof against all forms of Anti-Imperialist activity within its bounds.

The crushing blow to this Slave Constitution can only be inflicted by extra Parliamentary mass action.

**The Communist Party Of India** is confident of your support and of the support of every militant section of workers and peasantry, every genuine fighter for independence, when it exposes the illusion that the Constitution can be "wrecked" through the "Constitution" that the crucial question of the hour is acceptance or non-acceptance of Office. Comrades, we are all agreed in our determination to wreck the Constitution. How can this be achieved? By the Anti-Imperialist Movement in India. What is to be its counter-attack to this challenge of the Imperialist Power?

**The Communist Party** declares that the vital issues confronting the Indian Struggle for Independence are:—

(a). The need for a mass United Front of all Anti-Imperialist forces, *on the basis of action along the whole economic and political front*. It denounces all manoeuvres to limit the struggles.

(b). The need for violence. Realising as it does that the illusion of non-violence has made of the Anti-Imperialist Movement a standing target for acts of unparalleled violence and terror.

It points to the experience of all Revolutionary History in the past and present, to the advent of Fascism in Italy, in Germany, in Austria, in China, it points to the ever growing menace of war as the international crisis of capitalism develops as emphasising the vital necessity of mass United Action for the forceful overthrow of

the Imperialist Government and the setting up of a Government representative of the people of India.

In order to achieve such unity amongst all the anti-imperialist forces in India it is necessary that all parties and organisations should be prepared to make some concessions in order that Common Front may be secured. Hence the **Communist Party** is prepared to join forces with the Congress in its fight for Constituent Assembly and it invites all other Anti-Imperialist Parties and organisations-Trade Unions, etc. to do the same, accepting the Constituent Assembly as a common objective around which to rally. Similarly it maintains that as an effective guarantee of the representative character of such Constituent Assembly the masses of workers and peasants have a right to demand an effective affiliation of Trade Unions and Peasants' Unions to the Indian National Congress.

In such a way-by agreement on the basis of struggle for one common objective-can an Anti-Imperialist People's Front be established to secure a Government for the people and by the people.

In connection with its United Front proposals the Communist Party is being made the subject of attack from two quarters. On the one hand it is alleged that the Communist Party has abandoned its principles and its fundamental objective of Soviet Power by relegating "Soviet Power" to the sphere of "Words" while in deeds it pursues a Constituent Assembly. On the other hand exactly the opposite allegation is being made that this is a "hypocritical and opportunist manoeuvre".

Comrades, we take this opportunity to emphatically repudiate these allegations.

On the one hand we openly declare, as we have always declared, that the emancipation of the workers and peasants of India will not be completely won until the struggle has been carried through to the establishment of Soviet Power by the workers and peasants as the first prerequisite for the building of a socialist economy in India. This is the fundamental objective towards which our whole organisation and policy is directed. It always has been and it always will be. On the other hand we are

fully conscious of the existing stage of the Class-Struggle. At a time when the ruthless and unbridled Dictatorship of Imperialism is seeking to strengthen its stronghold and intensify its exploitation of an already impoverished country comprising 350 million people, at a time when the deepening crisis of Capitalism is threatening the people with war and destruction, it pledges itself to uncompromising struggle against Imperialism. The **Communist Party** is prepared to join forces with any who are prepared to act (and not merely be content with talk and criticism) for the overthrow of the Imperialist Power. We realise that there are many elements amongst those with whom we are allied for this purpose, whose ultimate aims and policy may be fundamentally opposed to Soviet Power (just as there are elements amongst the bourgeoisie who may desert to the camp of Imperialism on the plea that "half a loaf is better than the possibility of no bread"). But we say that we want to see the people of India free to choose their own form of Government and determine their own internal economy, free from the exactions and exploitation of a foreign power.

*Hence we fight for the Freedom of India, for the confiscation of British capital, for the repudiation of all "debts" to British Imperialism, for a Constituent Assembly of the people.*

## II The United Front and Class-Struggle

In the foregoing section we examined some of the political issues confronting the people of India at the present time. The New Constitution was shewn to be no constitution at all in the sense in which that word is ordinarily understood, but in fact a device whereby the Imperialist Power seeks to strengthen its Dictatorship, to extend its control over the Native States, and to consolidate its hold over the entire economy of the country.



In the following section we propose to make an analysis of the economic conditions out of which the struggle of the People of India against Imperialism is developing.

In the previous section it was maintained that the situation demands the broadest United Front of the People to fight against what is undoubtedly the prelude to an intensified exploitation of the country by a ruthless Imperialism seeking for itself a way out of the chronic crisis of Capitalism. Reference was made to the fact that there are some who allege that in adopting this policy, in supporting a United Front of all the exploited and oppressed, no matter to what political party, organisation or community they belong, the **Communist Party** shows inconsistency and lack of any political understanding of the objective conditions prevailing in India, that it has abandoned the class-struggle in favour of an opportunist or even fascist policy of comprehensiveness.

We are not here concerned with the motives of those "Marxist" critics who have taken up this left pose and in the name of "orthodoxy" criticise the Marxism of the **Communist Party**.

They may be perfectly sincere, in which case we hope they will be persuaded to frankly admit their efforts; on the other hand there is a certain type of "Left Opportunist" who for purely personal motives seeks to gain the supports of important sections by counterposing "left" slogans against the United Front thereby disrupting the basis for United Action against Imperialism and isolating militant section from the struggle of the masses. Such tactics require to be exposed equally as much as the compromising role of reformist and bourgeois leadership.

**The Communist Party of India** has arrived at its decision to support the United Front struggle for Constituent Assembly of the People, only after mature consideration and careful analysis of the objective conditions prevailing in the relationship of class forces in India at the present time.

Let it first be said, then, that all talk of abandoning the class-struggle for the Constituent Assembly slogan obscuring class issues reveals a complete misunderstanding of:—

(a). The meaning of class-struggle. This cannot be taken up or condoned at will. It is inherent in capitalist society and arises from objective economic forces.

(b). The whole policy of the *Communist Party* with regard to the common United Front objective of Constituent Assembly.

So far from "Abandoning" the class-struggle we maintain that under the objective conditions at present prevailing, the struggle for the complete overthrow of Imperialism and for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly is in effect a class-struggle *i.e.* a struggle against the Indian Capitalists, Landlords and Usurers no less than a struggle against Imperialism. This we propose to demonstrate by an analysis of the objective economic conditions out of which the class-struggle at its present stage arises. We do not maintain that the masses of workers, peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie are conscious of the class character of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle. At the present time this is obviously not true. But we do maintain its class character is becoming increasingly clarified and will become more and more clarified as the struggle develops.

## **Origin and Development of Class-Struggle in India**

We propose to demonstrate that the clash of economic forces out of which the class-struggle in India at the present time is developing it is characterised by three main factors.

*A. Imperialist Domination.* The dictatorship of British Finance Capital over our entire Indian economy. By this is meant the predominance of British Capital in the economic sphere. The continuous drain, in the form of Interest and Profit, on its economic resources which this implies. The control of the country's financial machinery and credit through its Reserve Bank, its Imperial Bank, and its various satellite Banks. The control of its currency and exchange. (The 1s-6d rupee ratio in effect gives a preferential tariff to British goods of 12½ p.c. It also enhances their value to 128 crores of rupees.)

Thus the Industrial development of the country is made subservient to the interests of British capital. The Cotton, Iron, and Steel industries are the only Indian industries over which

Indians maintain capital control. This being subject to the factors referred to above and to which reference was made on pp. 2, 3, & 4, of the previous section dealing with the New Constitution.

*B. The struggle of the Indian capitalists against the Dictatorship of British Finance Capital and against the competition of British Industry and Commerce.*

The Bourgeoisie endeavours to free itself from barriers to extending the range of its exploiting power. It is a struggle for some control over its own finances, for the development of Native Trade and Capital through its Bank, its whole credit machinery. Further it is faced with the growing militancy of workers and peasantry in their struggle against increasing impoverishment, wage-cuts and indebtedness and in face of the growing menace of actual starvation. Hence it must safeguard its own capital against the consequences of revolution.

Thus it must always compromise. It can never lead the revolutionary struggle of the masses against Imperialism because of the consequences to itself, and its own interests.

It may pose as the leader of the movement for National Independence and the champion of the masses by representing Imperialism to be the sole cause of India's poverty. But it is unable to disguise the fact that it ruthlessly exploits the masses itself as we propose to shew. Ultimately it must inevitably compromise with Imperialism and sabotage the Revolutionary Movement. If it seeks to establish its leadership of the movement this is only in order to wring concessions from Imperialism for itself, and to be in a position to betray the Movement before it reaches the stage of open revolution and menaces its own interests.

C. (i) The struggle of the working-class against increasing exploitation. Wage-cuts, speeding up, retrenchment, housing conditions etc.

(ii) The struggle of the peasants for land and against landlords, against devastating effects of capitalist crisis of agricultural produce.

Let us now examine these three factors a little more in detail.

### A Dictatorship of British Finance Capital

It was estimated in 1930 (Financial Times Jan.9) that the total value of British Capital invested in India was £700 million or Rs.930 crores (of which approximately Rs. 250 crores was spent on Imperialist wars outside India—Afghanistan, China, Abyssinia, etc.). This sum which will be realised represents a continual drain on the resources of the country in the form of Interest and Profit is made up as follows:

#### Government Sterling Debt

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| held in England | Rs. 347 crores |
|-----------------|----------------|

#### Guaranteed Railway Debt

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| held in England | Rs. 160 crores |
|-----------------|----------------|

|                 |                 |               |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 5 p.c. war loan | held in England | Rs. 22 crores |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|

#### British Capital Invested in Coys.

|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Registered in India | Rs. 100 crores. |
|---------------------|-----------------|

#### British Capital Invested in Coys.

|                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Reg. outside India | Rs. 133 crores. |
|--------------------|-----------------|

|              |        |                 |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|
| Unclassified | ... .. | Rs. 152 crores. |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| The annual value of British Exports to India | Rs. 120 crores. |
|--|-----------------|

It is interesting to notice the progress of India's Public Debt under British Administration. The figures given represent the total debt *i.e.* in securities held both in England and in India

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| 1800— | Rs. 1.5 crores.                    |
| 1805— | Rs. 27.5 crores.(Wellesley's Wars) |
| 1839— | Rs. 45 crores. (Afghan War)        |
| 1860— | Rs. 130 crores.                    |
| 1900— | Rs. 260 crores                     |
| 1925— | Rs. 780 crores.                    |
| 1936— | Rs. 1011 crores.(excluding         |

P.O. Savings Banks and Provident Funds etc. held in India.)

However apart from the British Financial and Trading interests outlined above, the following will give a picture in official figures of the way in which the Imperialist power fulfils its "sacred obligations" to the People of India "committed to its charges". Taking the year 1931-32 as an example of the way the annual revenue of the country is expended apart from interest on the above debt.

Military and Marine.....Rs. 57 crores.

Jail and Police..... Rs. 16.5 crores. That frightful but 'well meant' engine of draconian oppression, Col—Osborne.

Education and Scientific.....Rs. 14.5 crores. (5 times as much as this is spent on Education in Great Britain for a population of 40 million).

Medical and Public Health Rs. 6.5 crores.

The total of "Home Charges" amount to between Rs. 60-65 crores yearly. Debts and "Home Charges" are guaranteed by the Government (Sec pp. 2, 3, 4, of the previous section on the New Constitution).

The following are some of the results of 150 years of British Administration in the spheres of the Education and Public Health.

### **Education**

Government Census Report for 1931-32 states that 199 million out of 247 million people in British India are illiterate.

Of the 120 million female population only 2 million are receiving any education.

There were only 12 million pupils attending all kinds of educational institutions in British India (In the USSI) for the same year there were 22 million out of population of 160 million.

### **Public Health**

In 1930 the Medical Research Workers estimated that there is an average of from 5 to 6 million deaths from preventable diseases every year. Up to that year for a population of 247 million in British India there were only 4771 hospitals with accommodation for 53 thousand patients. The average expectation of life has been steadily declining since 1881. According to Sir John Magaw I.M.S. it is "half what it might be". He stated that 61 p.c. of the population is under-nourished.

Infantile Mortality.....232.6 per thousand. (in the working-class area in Bombay it is 577 per thousand.)

Maternal Mortality ... 24.5 per thousand.

In Bengal ... 50 per thousand.

(In Great Britain ..... 4.06 per thousand.)

The Medical Research Workers found that in working class areas the number of children who live to reach wage earning age

is only 5 p.c. They estimate that it would be possible to raise this to 80 p.c. or 90 p.c.

Here then is briefly told in terms of official statistics a part of the story of suffering and degradation to which the people of India are subject under the ruthless exploitation and Dictatorship of British Finance Capital further comment is superfluous. *Suffice to say that these are some of the economic conditions out of which the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement of the Masses is developing.*

## THE ROLE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

### “Champions of the Cause of the Masses”

This nation propagated by the Bourgeoisie in order to confuse the issues confronting the masses and gain their support in its efforts to wring concessions out of the Imperialist power has been sufficiently exposed through its betrayal of the anti-Imperialist movements as soon as it sensed the danger of Revolution to its own interests, its “*compromising*” ideology of “*peaceful persuasion*”, and “*non-violence*”. But we are now dealing with the economic aspect of the matter from which the political rule of the Bourgeoisie is derived.

It was stated above that the only industries over which Indians maintain Capital control are the cotton, iron and steel industries. The development of these industries during the war and post-war period when restrictive measures against them were relaxed afford a remarkable indication of the possibilities of industrial development in a socialist economic system unfettered by the stranglehold of Rent, Interest and Profit. But we will examine for example some facts concerning the development of the Cotton Industry for the purpose of demonstrating the rule of the bourgeoisie. Are Indian capitalists any “better people” than any other capitalists? Are they any less “Grasping”? Have they really any more regard for the “welfare” of the workers than capitalists in any other part of the world? The following figures will afford an answer to these questions.

95 p.c. of the share capital in the Indian Cotton Industry is said to be in Indian hands.

## Developments of The Cotton Industry

The following shows the development in the production of Cotton yarn cloth and piece goods.

| Year.   | Consumption of piece goods Yds. per head. | Imports Million Yds. | Production Indian Mills. Mills Yds. |
|---------|---|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1907-08 | 10.39                                     | 2407                 | 740                                 |
| 1914    | 13.29                                     | 3130                 | 1070                                |
| 1919    | 7.26                                      | 1000                 | 1310                                |
| 1928    | 12.11                                     | 1940                 | 2190                                |
| 1930    | 12.04                                     | 1619                 | 2290                                |

| No. of Mills.          | Yarn out put Mill. Yds. | Cloth out-put Mill. Yds |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1876 47                | 1899 514                | 102                     |
| 1934 352               | 1931 867                | 591                     |
| Paid-up Capital        | Year—1895 Crores 11.6   | 1928 39 1930 35         |
| Total Profits: Pre-War | 3.7 Crores.             |                         |
|                        | 1917 6.7 Crores.        |                         |
|                        | 1920 16.6 Crores.       |                         |

In 1920 during the boom period the average dividend extracted from the Industry by the Bourgeoisie was 12 p.c. the highest being 365 p.c. (the share-holders of one company actually demanded 500 p.c. on their shares).

The wages paid to mill-hands according to G.T. Garrett I.C.S. are approximately one-sixth of the wages paid for the same class of work in England.

The last Census by the Labour Office shewed that the average wages of skilled and unskilled work were as follows.

|           | Men    | Women  | Children | Cuts<br>enforced since<br>1926 |
|-----------|--------|--------|----------|--------------------------------|
| Bombay    | 1-3-0  | 0-9-9  |          | 20 p.c.                        |
| Ahmedabad | 1-5-0  | 0-11-9 | 0-5-0    | 6¼ p.c.                        |
| Sholapur  | 0-14-5 | 0-5-10 | 0-3-6    | 12½ p.c.                       |

Against the implication of the above, in the Bombay Textile mills alone there were 113 strikes between 1930 and 1934 involving about 230 thousand men with a loss of over 4 million working days. For the whole cotton and woollen industry there were 658 strikes between 1925 and 1933. As regards housing conditions Bombay may be cited as an example by no means the worst. Here 97 p.c. of the working class live in one room tenements, 6 to 9 persons in a room, for which the rent amounts to more than ten per cent of their income.

Infantile mortality amounts to 577 per thousand births as stated above whereas for those living in two roomed tenements it is 254 per thousand. This is a fact which has been well known for some years yet it has not led to any improvement in the workers' housing conditions.

Perhaps enough has already been said to indicate that the role of the bourgeoisie is the role of the Capitalist exploiter—the class enemy of the working class. We will however examine a few facts connected with other industries in which Indian Capital is invested along with British Capital in India. For as we have stated no arbitrary distinction can be drawn between capitalism as per British Capital and as per Indian Capital so far as the working class is concerned.

### **Jute Industry**

English capitalists were not slow to realise that working conditions in India, lower wages and longer hours, gave them larger interest on their capital than in Great Britain. Hence an increasing volume of British Capital has been invested in Indian Industries. This applies particularly in the Jute Industry (though here too there is a large proportion of Indian capital invested).



Thus by 1925 Indian mills were consuming five times as much jute as much famous Dundee Jute Industry. The following table shows the development of the industry between 1880 and 1931:

| Year | No. of Mills | Looms | Spindles | Workers Employed |
|------|--------------|-------|----------|------------------|
| 1880 | 22           | 4949  | 70840    | 27494.           |
| 1908 | 54           | 27244 | 562274   | 187771.          |
| 1929 | 98           | 53901 | 1140435  | 343257.+         |
| 1931 | 100          | 61834 | 1224982  | 307676.++        |
| 1932 | 103          | 61400 | 1220500  | 276800           |

## Profits

In 1925 the "reserve fund" of almost every company exceeded the amount of capital invested. In 1920 the average dividend for all companies was 14 p.c. Between 1925 and 1928 the price of Raw Jute fell from Rs.124 p.c. per 400 lbs. to Rs. 73/ per 400 lbs. Wages were reduced and hours increased from 54 to 60 hours a week in 1928. Yet dividends still ranged from 100 p.c. in the Budge Budge Mills to 140 p.c. in the Fort Gloster Company. In 1929 despite the "depression" the larger companies were paying from 55 p.c. to 85 p.c. though by 1931 they had dropped to between 10 p.c. and 40 p.c. The price of raw jute fell as a result of the depression from 25 rupees per hundred to 38 rupees

In 1900 the Total investment in the industry amounted to 7 crores of rupees. In 1932 it had reached 24 crores of rupees.

Official wage rates for the present year are given as:

| Men       | Rovers             | Shifters | Spinners        |
|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Per month | 12-15-0            | 12-6-0   | 13-to 16-       |
| Women     | Feeders            |          | Receivers       |
|           | Rs 9-6-0 to 12-6-0 |          |                 |
| Men       | Rovers             | Shifters | Spinners        |
| Per month | 12-15-0            | 12-6-0   | 13-to 16-       |
| Women     | Feeders            |          | Receivers       |
|           | Rs 9-6-0 to 11-6-0 |          | 9-0-0 to 11-0-0 |

† N.B. Compare the increase in looms and spindles and the proportionate increase in Number of workers employed during this period of "rationalisation" and speeding up, wagecuts and longer hours

†† Continuation of the same process.

Between 1925 and 1933 there were over 150 strikes in the Jute Industry.

The following table shows the increased output of Coal in million Tons:

1913—16.2    1926—22.6    1929—23.0    1933—19.0

The following were the dividends paid by various companies between 1922 and 1929 before the "depression"

Bengal Coal Coy. 44 per cent Katras Jharria Coal Coy. 96 per cent. Bengal Nagpur Coy. 75 per cent. The average wages of the miners was nine annas a day, according to "Capital" Jan. 7, '32, this was cut to six annas a day in 1931. (Even then they were better off than their fellow workers in the Gold Mines of Mysore who it is estimated live at from 21 per cent to 31 per cent lower standard of living than that provided in the Indian prisons.)

The latest official figures show the normal wage rates in the coal mines to be as follows (per day). The amount varying in different districts.

|      |         |                  |         |
|------|---------|------------------|---------|
| Year |         | Underground      | Workers |
|      | Miners  | Loaders          | Females |
| 1933 | As 8-14 | 6-12             | 4-6     |
|      |         | Open working     |         |
|      | Miners  | Loaders          | Females |
|      | As 5-8  | 4-6              | 3-6     |
|      |         | Surface workers. |         |
|      | Skilled | Unskilled        | Females |
| 1932 | As 8-12 | As 6-11          | As 4-5  |

It is impossible here to give further statistics for all the other industries in India, and for wage rates in various industrial centres. But the picture is by no means complete without these and without reference to the conditions prevailing in Indian factories in general and in particular the mica, carpet, bidi, shellac and host of other small factories which employ the greatest proportion of Indian factory labour. But this picture can best be supplied by the reader by reference to his own locality; it may be

his own experience. The above survey, inadequate as it is, will have given some indication of the nature of Capitalism in India.

Despite the enormous profits of Industry shown in the above figures the poverty of the working class, the degradation and squalor of factory mining and housing conditions cannot be equalled anywhere in the world it is undoubtedly true to say that in no country (for which there are any figures available) have such enormous profits been realised, while wages have remained so low and living conditions at the level of barbarism. The Whitely Commission reported that 75 per cent of the industrial population were in debt. Mal-nutrition is said to cause a 20 per cent loss of efficiency amongst the industrial workers. The same report attributes the low standard of efficiency compared with other countries to hardships, physique, diet, housing conditions. It estimated the average loss per year of working days through preventile diseases at from 2 to 3 weeks for all industrial workers. The report concludes that it was struck by the poor health of the industrial workers due to defects in diet and complete absence of sanitary arrangements.

Some reference has already been made to housing conditions. 97 p.c. of the working class in Bombay live in one room tenements, 6 to 9 persons in a room. Infantile mortality being 577 per thousand births. In Karachi one-third of the total population and in Ahmedabad 73 p.c. of the total population live in one room tenements 6 to 9 pesons in a room. Unemployment of which there is no insurance or any other provision is now estimated at forty million. *Such are some of the conditions out of which the vanguard of the Indian Revolution-the industrial proletariat-are rising.*

The last ten years have shown a ceaseless conflict between the industrial working class and their exploiters whether Indian or British. Between 1925 and 1933 there were no fewer than 1314

strikes in the main industries of which 658 occurred in the cotton and woolen industry and 150 in the jute. The following are the official strike figures:

|                   | 1925 | 1926 | 1927 | 1928 | 1929 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Cotton & Woolen   | 69   | 57   | 60   | 110  | 78   |
| Jute              | 15   | 33   | 11   | 19   | 13   |
| Engineering works | 7    | 4    | 6    | 11   | 7    |
| Railways          | 6    | 3    | 3    | 9    | 4    |
| Others            | 37   | 31   | 49   | 54   | 39   |
| Total             | 134  | 128  | 129  | 203  | 141  |
|                   |      | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 |
| Cotton & Woolen   |      | 68   | 75   | 54   | 87   |
| Jute              |      | 13   | 22   | 13   | 11   |
| Engineering works |      | 10   | 5    | 3    | 1    |
| Railways          |      | 9    | 8    | 6    | 3    |
| Others            |      | 48   | 56   | 42   | 44   |
| Total             |      | 148  | 166  | 118  | 146  |

Since the capitalist crisis of 1931 and the "rationalisation" which followed, the workers have shown determined counter-attacks against reduction in wages, speeding up, and retrenchment by the capitalist class seeking to wring the last anna—the last ounce of strength out of the workers. In some industries, mining for example, wages have been cut by more than 33 p.c. Despite the ruthless suppression of their organisations, and the brutal assaults of police and soldiers—the agents of the Indian Bourgeoisie no less than the Imperialist power—the workers are showing increasing militancy in their struggle against the barbarous conditions under which they are forced to exist.

Our purpose in giving this lengthy but still incomplete analysis of the economic conditions and the class antagonisms arising from them has been to demonstrate the fact that.

A. The economic system which prevails in India is rapidly leading the country to ruin and to wholesale starvation amongst the masses of people.

B. To demonstrate the role of the bourgeoisie in the economic and political sphere, for the former is the foundation of the latter.

Despite the Dictatorship of British Finance Capital, its exploitation of the entire economic of the country and its people despite its domination over the Indian Bourgeoisie the fact remains that Indian Capitalism is inextricably bound up with the economic system administered by British Imperialism through its banks, through its whole credit and financial machinery. Despite the economic strangulation of the country by British Imperialism against which the bourgeoisie professes to lead the struggles, the fact remains that its own capital is intermingled with British capital in industrial enterprises. (Further it should be pointed out that of the National Debt amounting to over 1011 crores of rupees 500 crores is held in India in the form of securities guaranteed by the Government See pp 2, 3, 4 dealing with the New Constitution.) Its capital resources have to be safeguarded by the same Imperial Administration. The interests of the bourgeoisie have to be defended, as the workers' experience reveals by the same administration, the same legal machinery the same army, the same polices, against the working class movement.

*Once overthrow the exploiting Imperialist Power, confiscate its capital, sweep away its administration, its anti-working-class and anti-peasant legislation and the exploiting power of the bourgeoisie must inevitably be swept away as well.*

And there is no one who is more conscious of this fact than the India Capitalist, the Indian Landlord and the Indian Usurer. That is why in the past they have always betrayed the Anti-Imperialist Movement, watered down the meaning of Swaraj, imposed their bourgeois ideology of peaceful persuasion and non-violence on the movement. *The bourgeoisie can never play a revolutionary role in India. It will always betray and seek to sabotage the*

*revolution when it senses the danger to itself.* The growing struggle of the working class is directed objectively and in increasing degree consciously against the exploitation of the Indian bourgeoisie no less than against Imperialist Power.

## **Agriculture**

70 per cent of the working population in India is engaged in agriculture. We propose to show that the millions of India's peasantry are as much the victims of capitalist and Imperialist exploitation as the industrial working-class. The goal of the peasant movement is identical with that of the proletariat—the revolutionary overthrow of Capitalism and Imperialism.

Agriculture in India is as much subject to the recurrent crisis of capitalism and the consequent depression world prices as agriculture in any other country. Under the prevailing capitalist economy of which the three all-powerful determining factors are Rent, Interest and Profit. The peasantry have perforce been drawn into the capitalist maelstrom of world markets and price competition. ✓

Herein lies one of the more glaring contradictions of capitalism. The process can be described quite simply.

The exactions of Rent, Interest and Profit impoverise the masses necessitating reduction in the wages of industrial workers during what are known as periods of "depression" in order that interest may be secured by those who own or share the capital of the means of production, in other words the "share-holders" of the various industrial enterprises. Hence the masses are unable to purchase the food, clothing, etc. which are directly or indirectly the products of agriculture.

The result is what is known as "over-production". There is an immediate fall in the prices of agricultural products and the impoverishment extends to the peasantry what in turn are unable to purchase the manufactured goods which are the products of industry.

In some capitalist countries a remedy is sought by subsidising restrictions on agricultural production. By paying the agriculturist not to produce wheat, cotton, coffee, etc.

Thus in America (under the A.A.A.) a situation had arisen where it became necessary, despite the fact that "millions were suffering the tortures of Hunger", to spend a hundred and ten million dollars on ploughing in or mowing down eleven million acres of cotton. In the following year 150 million dollars were spent on Cot. Acreage Reduction, 33 million dollars on the slaughter of unwanted pigs, 950 millions in "Corn Hog Production Control", 110 million dollars on "Wheat Acreage Reduction", 21 million dollars on Tobacco Acreage Reduction. (See "Economist" 31-12-34).

It was reported in November 1933 that in Denmark cattle were being slaughtered in the Government slaughter houses at the rate of five thousand a week for their carcasses to be burnt in the incinerators. In Brazil between 1931 and 1933 twenty million bags of coffee were either burnt or thrown into sea.

It will be realised that these immense sums were paid in the form of compensation to agriculturists. In India, though agriculture has suffered from the depression and the fall in Prices of its products, no such "remedy" is sought. The peasantry are left to eat roots and refuse as they are in Bengal at the present time.

Some indication of the effect of the capitalist crisis on agriculture in India may be provided by the following figures. The price of staple agricultural products—cotton, wheat, jute, rice, etc. dropped by 20 p.c. in 1931. By 1932 they had dropped more than 50 p.c. Despite this fact the revenue from land increased from Rs. 32 crores in 1929 to Rs. 35 crores in 1931. It now stands at Rs. 36.5 crores. Under the New Constitution it will be increased still more.

The total effect of the crisis on Indian Trade, Industry, and Agriculture is illustrated by the following figures showing the

decline in imports and exports and in wholesale prices of agricultural products, raw materials, etc.

| Average for 1921-29          | 1931 | 1932 | 1933  | Decline in p.c.  |
|------------------------------|------|------|-------|------------------|
| Crores of Rs. 242            | 163  | 125  | 123   | 58 p.c Imports.  |
| Do 326                       | 226  | 160  | 135   | 45 p.c. Exports. |
| Decline in wholesale prices. |      |      |       |                  |
| 1928                         | 1931 | 1932 | 1933  | Decline.         |
| 148                          | 96   | 91   | 83 65 | points           |

We make no attempt to express these effects in terms of human misery and suffering. In recent years the "balance of trade" has been "remedied" by the export of gold to the value of between Rs. 55 and 95 crores yearly.

In passing we may note that in Russia where the stranglehold of Rent, Interest and Profit has been swept away and where the social ownership of the means of production has been established there have been no crises and depressions and never will be. The wages of the industrial working class have increased with the enormous increase in Industrial production. (It was quadrupled between 1925 and 1932.) Hence there is no restriction on the production of food, raw materials, etc. by agriculture but the consuming capacity of the people. And the prosperity of the peasantry has accordingly increased. We point this out in order to refute the insidious suggestion sometimes made in India that there is a conflict of interests between town and country. Under capitalism there may be, but in a socialist economic order the interests of both are inter-dependent.

Greater production in Agriculture results in the greater prosperity of the peasants. The greater prosperity of the peasantry increases their demands on the products of Industry and Manufacture. The greater output of Industry means a higher standard of living for the workers and consequently increases their demands on Agriculture. There can never be any question of "over-production" in a socialist economic order, which is free from the interference of Rent, Interest, and Profit, Credit Currency and Exchange manipulations etc. It is these all powerful factors which in Capitalist economy produce just the reverse process. The



decreasing wages of the working-class limits their consuming capacity and consequently the demand on Agricultural production. The slump or "over-production" which results in turn affects the cultivators who are unable to purchase the products of Industry and Manufacture, clothing, agricultural apparatus, etc. Hence in some countries vast sums are spent in "limiting production" in order to keep prices up and keep the cultivators quiet. Some countries "inflate" their currency, others "deflate" it. But nothing can solve this inner contradiction of capitalist economy or break the vicious circle of ever recurrent crises. (Except the force which broke it once and for all in Russia). Increase in production will always tend towards "depression" and in "crisis".

### **Land Tenure**

Space does not permit of an examination of the various land tenure systems established (and forcibly maintained) by the British after they had appropriated the Land and set up a Landlord class hitherto unknown in India.

The ways and means by which the hard-earned fruit of his labour are wrung from the peasant by the Government and the landlord in the form of Rent, customs and excise, local cesses and other tributes, vary from province to province and may amount to anything up to 75 per cent of his income, in extreme cases. Much might be said to illustrate how through these systems and through the recurrent rises of capitalism the total indebtedness of the peasantry reached the figure of Rs. 90 crores. In the Punjab alone the total agricultural debt had become 19 times the land revenue for the province by 1922. By 1930 it had reached the figure of Rs. 270 crores. The average income per head (i. e. including women and children) was estimated recently at Rs. 14 per year or Rs. 0-0-8 per day. The net result being that according to Sir John Megaw's estimate 61 per cent of the population are under-nourished. Some conception of the devastating extent to which the peasantry are exploited under these systems can be gauged by these figures.

Much might be said further if space permitted about the Kamianti, veth, and Khambari systems which previously in some

parts of the country and under which whole families are held in serfdom and even sold and mortgaged. Where the land cannot be seized the entire product of the peasants' labour is appropriated by the Marwari who returns him, enough each year to keep himself and his family alive at a bare subsistence level.

Despite the world "depression" the total Land Revenue as noted above has increased to Rs. 36.5 crores, representing 45 per cent of the provincial Revenues. Of this less than one-eleventh part is returned even indirectly to the land. This represents in practice total exaction from the peasantry of from Rs. 60 to 80 crores, the remainder being the share of the landlords, a proportionately minute section of the population. It is noteworthy, however that this class of parasites living on the land had been steadily increasing until the recent depression which ruined a large number of "small men". It increased by nearly a million during the decade 1911-21 which included the famine and epidemic in which ten million people died.

Before concluding reference must be to another consequence of the process of exploitation referred to above, namely, the alienation of land and the fragmentation of holding G.T.Garratt, I.C.S. affirms that there is a "general consensus of opinion that for growing the ordinary grain crops fifteen acres of dry land is about the minimum upon which a man can live decently." Dr. Keatinge estimates an "ideal holding" enabling a man "to support himself and his family in reasonable comfort would consist of forty or fifty acres of fair land in one block with at least one good irrigation well" in the Deccan.

Yet we find that in Dr. H. Manns "*typical Deccan Village*" 611 out of the 729 plots of land were under two acres. 31 per cent of the holding could not even under the most favourable circumstances maintain their owners. Only one in seven of the Punjab cultivators' farms are of fifteen acres which are considered the minimum for a decent life, and this is considered one of the more *prosperous* provinces! In South and East India the average size of holdings is now reduced to five acres. In the Bombay Presidency the Royal Commission on agriculture showed that 48 per cent of the holdings consisted of less than five acres

the area thus covered representing only 24 per cent of the total land area of the province. Out of this holding the cultivator has to pay land revenue, water rate, local cesses, pasture fees and other forms of tribute. The result is that 60 per cent of the inhabitants of the province are in debt. In the second of Dr. Manns *Typical Deccan Villages* the debt amounted to Rs. 6700 against a net return from the land of Rs. 14,000 nearly 50 per cent. The U.P. Government admitted that the peasant were preferring to leave the land altogether. In the year 1931 in the U.P. the number of peasants who were forced to leave the land increased from 26 thousand in the previous year to 71 thousand for that year alone, while the orders for enforced collection of tax amounted to Rs. 256,284.

For the whole of British India the number of Landless agricultural Labourers has increased by 400 p.c. since 1882. The number increased from 21.6 million in 1921 to 31.4 million in 1931, and it is still increasing today. The stifling of all other forms of economic life prevents their absorption in Industry. The Land monopoly at present prevailing prevents any extension of the area of cultivable Land.

Thus an ever-increasing proportion of the population are being driven from the land without any other means of subsistence. Before the depression the plantations offered possibilities of employment. However, despite the enormous profits realised by the Tea Companies during the "boom period"—profits ranging from Rs. 288 per acre to Rs. 614 per acre Rs. 42 p.c. to 225 p.c. in the Bishmath Tea Coy. and the New Dovars Coy.—the peasants for the most part would rather have starved. Many were known to have starved rather than live under the inhuman conditions that prevailed there.

For the small holding cultivator, that is to say for the vast majority of Indian agriculturists the prospect remains that of ever diminishing returns as the crises of capitalism recur and prices fall and the exactions of Government, Landlord and Usurer increase.

**The Communist Party** maintains—It is a vicious circle from which there is no escape for the peasantry under the existing system administered by British Imperialism. It declares that the

first and immediate step is the "*Cancellation of all Debts*" and '*Land to the peasants*'

For the benefit of those who refer to the latter demand as "visionary" and unfeasible and plead *Land scarcity* as the cause of India's poverty we quote below the Government figures shewing the distribution of Land area. It should be pointed out that under the existing administration, Irrigation Works have only extended to one-fifth of the cultivated land in British India. This being chiefly for the export crops, wheat, sugar and cotton, (In the Punjab Irrigation Works Yield a profit to the investors of Rs. 1.3 crores annually.)

Total Land Area in British India—669 million acres; All India—1161 million acres. Net area actually sown—229 million acres; Current Fallow—50 million acres; Good soil not "Available" for cultivation—146 million acres; untilled—155 million acres—Forest—89 million acres.

With the breaking of the land monopoly and the building up of socialist economic order in India there would be room for many times the existing population. For apart from the grant of Land to the Peasants which would be *one of the first acts* of the Revolutionary Government there would follow immediately a large-scale development of the country's resources, continuous expanding industries and an extension of irrigation works to be *owned and administered collectively by the Peasants*.

## **What is the Immediate Task**

Briefly we have sketched some of the objective conditions out of which the Indian Revolution is being born. The main conclusion to be derived from our analysis are:

(1) That the vital issue confronting the masses of India at the present time, workers and peasants, students and petit-bourgeoisie, in fact all sections of the exploited and oppressed people is the overthrow of Imperialism, the main bulwark of feudalism and capitalism in India which is strangling the *Life of the People* and has driven them into an abyss of debt, hunger, and degradation.

(2) The struggle of the masses is against the Landlord and Usurers, against the Indian capitalist exploiters of the people, against the Bourgeois class whose political stand is determined by the dictates of their own Rent, Interest and Profit. Despite this fact however the Bourgeoisie attempts to assume and retain in its own hands the leadership of the anti-Imperialist struggle in order that it may use the working-class and peasants' movement as a weapon with which to bargain with the Imperialist Power. But despite the dictatorship of British Finance Capital over the whole Financial, Industrial and Agrarian economy of the country and despite the barriers which under the New Constitution continue to prevent the fulfilment of the historical role of the bourgeoisie as the main capitalist exploiting power, the bourgeoisie is nevertheless unable to extricate itself from the system in which it has grown up. Despite its assumption of leadership in the past and its declarations that it is *on the side of the masses*, the fact remains that its roots are on the side of the class enemies of the workers and peasantry. Hence it can never play a revolutionary role in the struggles of the Indian People.

(3) It would however be a mistake to assume that the bourgeoisie will not make every effort and employ any device in order to discredit a genuine revolutionary leadership in the eyes on the people and maintain its own leadership of the anti-Imperialist movement. *Only the conscious revolutionary pressure of the masses will force them to relinquish their hold.* This is the task of the Communists to secure by patient demonstration the courageous leadership of the masses through the own organisations. Left Sectarianism attempting to set up *rival* organisations must necessarily weaken this process at the present stage and play into the hands of the bourgeoisie who even now are attempting to split the Anti-Imperialist movement. *Only when the revolutionary determination of the masses exercised from below through their own organisations has driven them from the leadership of the movement and undermined their bourgeois ideology of "Non-violence" will they openly seek to break-up and defeat the movement. There will they seek refuge in the arms of Imperialism.*

Such are the dialectics of the struggle. Such are the issues confronting the masses of India at the present time. *The Communist Party* maintains that the objective conditions such as we have shown in our analysis in these issues—the class character of the struggle etc. will become increasingly clarified in the process of the struggle in the day to day experience of the masses.'

It is the political task of the *Communist Party* to assist in their clarification through the medium of the existing organisations of the masses, the trade unions, the peasant unions, the National Congress etc. to lead the struggle itself and to secure that the correct lessons are learned both of victory and of temporary defeat.

It is our task to develop the purposive class-consciousness of the masses in the course of the struggle for their immediate demands, the demands of the peasants for land, for food, for freedom from the throttling chains of debt to Government, Landlords and Usurers, from the death fetters of capitalism on agricultural production, the demands of the proletariat for a living wage, for freedom of assembly and strike action, freedom to secure the means to live as human beings, for the recognition of their right to political power.

Hence the *Communist Party of India* supports the struggle of the masses for Political Power for a Constituent Assembly of the People in opposition to the New Constitution of British Imperialism. It maintains the necessity of *the widest possible basis for united Front action* to secure this object, the necessity for drawing in all the sections of the masses whether organised or unorganised in to the fighting front.

Thus the *Communist Party* proposes the effective affiliation of Trade Unions and Peasant Unions to the National Congress, in order that the struggle for complete Independence, for the convening of a Constituent Assembly of the People may be extended to the broadest masses of workers and peasantry. It urges the vital necessity for a common Front of all political party, youth organisations, students, etc., to fight for this objective. It therefore suggests the following basis of agreement for United Front Action.

**1. Complete National Independence—convening Constituent Assembly.**

**2. Repeal of all Anti-Democratic and Anti-Working Class Laws.**

**3. Release of all Political Prisoners.**

**4. Drastic Reduction of Rent and Land Revenue.**

**5. Cancellation of all Peasant and Working Class Debts.**

**6. Guaranteed minimum wages, 8-hour day, Maternity Privileges, Unemployment and Sickness Insurance.**

The Communist Party fully realises that such a basis of agreement represent only a partial and incomplete formulation of its own demands. Nevertheless it maintains that their realisation is of vital necessity for the masses of India and may be taken as the immediate steps for the Indian Revolutionary Movement.

Such a basis of agreement would in no way restrict the freedom of policy of political parties outside the limits of this agreement or the freedom to develop their own organisation. It does not propose that political parties should lose their identity in United Front activity.

It presupposes however the active co-operation of all parties to this agreement in extending the range and organisation of the United Front amongst the masses of the people through active Committees representing the various parties and organisation concerned. *The Communist Party* pledges its determined resistance to attempts whether from the Right or the Left to The Anti-Imperial Front.

The Communist Party, however, reserves its right and recognises the right of other parties to extend its own organisation amongst the masses. It maintains that the freedom of the masses of India from all forms of exploitation will not be completely won until Soviet Power has been established by the Workers and Peasants for the appropriation of the Industrial means of production by the proletariat for the building up of Socialism in India.

**The Communist Party of India declares its own Party programme to be the true dialectical goal of the Indian Revolutionary Movement:**

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1. For Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic. .
2. Repeal of all Anti-National, Anti-Peasant, and Anti-Working Class Laws.
3. Unconditional Release of all Political Prisoners, State-prisoners, Detenues and Internees.
4. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.
5. Withdrawal of the Army of Occupation from India.
6. Abolition of Native States—property of the Princes to be confiscated.
7. Repudiation of Working class and Peasant Indebtedness.
8. Confiscation of Large Estate, Land to the Tillers of Soil.
9. Repudiation of Imperialist Debts.
10. Confiscation of British Capital in India.
11. Confiscation and Nationalisation of all Key Industries, Plantations and Banks.
12. Revolutionary support to the British Working-class in its struggle against British Capitalism.
13. Active Opposition to Imperialist Wars.
14. Active support at all costs to the Soviet Union the Hope of the Toilers of the World.

**DOWN WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM.  
DOWN WITH ITS CONSTITUTION OF STARVATION  
AND SLAVERY.**

**FORWARD TO THE CONSTITUENT  
ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE  
FORWARD TO THE INDIAN REVOLUTION.  
WORKERS AND PEASANTS OF INDIA UNITE.**

Published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of  
India, Section of the Communist International.



## The Communist Party in The Fight Against Imperialism

"We want soberly to take into account *all stages* in the development of the class struggle and in the growth of class consciousness of the masses themselves, to be able to locate and solve at each stage the *concrete* problems of the revolutionary movement *corresponding* to this stage. We want to find a *common language* with broadest masses for the purpose of struggling against the class enemy to find ways of finally overcoming the *isolation of the revolutionary vanguard* from the masses of the proletariat and all other toilers, as well as of overcoming the fatal isolation of the working class itself from its natural allies in the struggle .....

"We want the Communists of each country promptly to draw and apply *all the lessons* that can be drawn from their own experience as the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat. We want them *as quickly as possible to learn how to sail on the turbulent waters of the class struggle*, and not to remain on the shore as observers and registrars of the surging waves on the expectation of fine weather." (August, 2, 1939 Dimitrov to the VII Congress).

\* \* \* \* \*

“The need is for you to turn out more and throw your energy into mass trade union, peasant and youth work. At the present moment the Party appears to be discussing questions almost completely removed from the struggles of the workers..... It is absolutely necessary that you should break away from this isolation.” (January, 1937 Tambe.)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Problems before us**

What do these highly significant statements mean for us in India? How do they apply to the programme and policy of our Party at this given stage?

At the risk of starting another long theoretical discussion it is necessary to ask some more questions before we seek to apply these two statements to ourselves.

What do we mean by the independent role of the working class? How is the fulfilment of this independent role consistent with the programme of a United National Front, comprising other classes?

What *are* the immediate tasks confronting the working class in defence of its own class interests, in the struggle for its own class demands?

Can these tasks after all be treated as separate or separable in practice.....by which we mean in actual struggle.....from the demands of other classes, the peasant masses, the petit-bourgeoisie, the students etc.?

Is there not a focal point at which the immediate class interests of almost all sections of the Indian people, including large sections of the bourgeoisie themselves converge even though the latter may not go the whole hog against Imperialism?

There are those who are already beginning to grow suspicious; who sense in the turn these questions are taking an incipient “betrayal” of the working class, a veiled attempt to “tie the proletariat to the tail of the bourgeoisie.” “We are not concerned with the class interests of other sections of society” say some.

"The Communist Party is the Party of the working class, and as such we fight for the class demands of the workers, for the Soviet Raj as the only State form under which the class demands of the workers can be realised."

Similarly there are comrades in the CSP (Congress Socialist Party) who will say: "For us the only alternative to Imperialism is Socialism. Only through the victory of Socialism shall we secure complete independence from Imperialist rule."

The argument is one and the same as that advanced by some of our own Party members against the line of the United National Front, for whether our Socialist friends realise it or not Socialism will never be realised in India or anywhere else without Soviet Raj.

In the minds of those who reason in this way the fight for Soviet Raj and for Socialism is placed in contradiction to the fight for the United National Front.

We stress the fact that it is only *in their minds* that the contradiction exists for we believe that it only arises from an over-preoccupation with theory divorced from practice. In other words it arises only in the minds of those who have studied Marxism as a philosophy of past history but who have been unable to apply it to the practical questions confronting the working class in the situation in which it finds itself in India at the present time.

### **No Short Cuts to Socialism**

What is the situation of the working class in India in relation to the other classes? Is it a situation in which we can place at the forefront of our *immediate* programme, the fight for Soviet Raj?

Clearly it is not. The Communist Party has probably better reasons than any other party in India for understanding that the main obstacle in the way of any sort of Raj other than the British Raj is the denial to the Indian people of the right to think and speak and act in its own vital interests, by which we mean the vital interests of any section or class of the people. It is the political and economic dictatorship of the British Raj which stifles all classes of the Indian people which in varying degrees hinders

their advancement and is actively directed against any alternative to the dominion of British Finance capital. The Constitution is a new-weapon which it seeks to forge and wield for this purpose, a weapon which all progressive sections of the people will unite to break in its hands, for whatever the internal class contradictions of these sections the class interests of all demands that it be broken.

For the working class in particular at this stage the main fight is not a fight for the overthrow of capitalism but a fight for the overthrow of Imperialist rule which denies us all the most elementary democratic rights and this struggle against Imperialism can only be developed on the basis of the *actual* struggles of the working-class to realise among other rights, the right of Trade Union and political organisation. Of all classes the working class is the most ruthlessly victimised and exploited by Imperialism and for this reason will prove its most militant opponent.

If the Communist Party does not make it abundantly clear to the working class that unless and until it begins here and now an immediate struggle to secure such elementary rights as freedom of trade union and political organisation all talk of Socialism and of Soviet Raj is nothing but a Utopian dream. If it fails to make this clearly understood, it will be guilty of grossly misleading the workers, of fostering the illusions of romantic dreamers, of aiding the agents provocateurs of Imperialism who seek to divide the anti-Imperialist forces against themselves as they have always sought to divide the religious communities against one another in order to maintain the rule of Imperialism.

As the Party of the working class we have got to make it understood that under the existing conditions of Imperialist dictatorship the working class is neither powerful enough nor organised nor disciplined enough to raise its own political slogans of Soviet Power, Workers' Republic etc., as the slogan of immediate action today.

[What do we suppose the motive of those police agents was who organised demonstrations at the Bombay AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) Session waving red flags and shouting, Down with the Congress! Down with the Constituent Assembly !,

if not to foster this illusion and to provoke internal conflicts amongst the people opposed to its rule.]

This does not mean that the Communist Party ceases to popularise Socialism amongst the masses or showing what steps are necessary here and now in order to pave the way for Socialism. It does mean though that we refuse to foster any illusions as to the nature of the struggle that lies ahead of us.

So far from "abandoning Socialism" it means that the Communist Party is not a collection of Utopian dreamers but the Party of revolutionary Marxists. It means that we are not afraid to face realities or seek to evade the difficulties confronting the working class at this given stage, we do not seek to solve these problems by "bare appeals and abstract propaganda" by "attempts to leap over difficult stages and complicated tasks of the movement" to use the words of Dimitrov.

"We must not confine ourselves to bare appeals to struggle for the proletarian dictatorship but must also find and advance those slogans and forms of struggle which arise out of the vital needs of the masses and are *Commensurate with Their Fighting Capacity at the Given Stage of The Movement.*"

Here in India we have got to learn to distinguish between popularising Socialism amongst the masses and raising the slogans of Socialism and of Soviet Power as the immediate political task of the moment for this is the way that leads to the isolation of the Party from the masses, to the handing over of the working class to be the "tail of the bourgeoisie." The masses must be taken as they are not as we should like to have them. It is only in the process of the struggle that they will overcome their doubts and vacillations." To raise such slogans at a time when the masses have neither the will nor the power to fight for them is a mockery of Marxism. At the best it is the way of the terrorist conspirator, at the worst it is the way of the counter-revolutionary provocateurs of Trotsky.

As the practical exponent of Marxism in India the Party must set itself against all attempts whether in our own ranks or in the ranks of the CSP to evade the hard facts of present day

circumstance by taking theoretical short-cuts to proletarian revolution, and then seeking to "concretise" these "short-cuts" in the formulation of a programme and policy far removed from the concrete political, social and economic conditions at present prevailing and out of which the proletariat in India is only now being born as an independent political force. We have made this mistake in the past not once or twice but consistently for a number of years.

There is a great deal of hard and courageous thinking to be done by us, a great deal of distasteful self-criticism, readjusting of our ideas, and remedying of mistakes if we are ever to succeed in making our party the genuine Party of the working class in fulfilling our historic task of steering the working class at present in its infancy "through the turbulent waters of class struggle" that lie ahead.

### **Our Programme is in the common interests of The Entire Indian People**

To begin with if our Party is to be the true champion of the vital interests of the working class, we must discard the purist notion that working class programme or policy has to be entirely separate or separable from the interests of other classes in India. The working class struggle is not a separate entity independent of the general struggle of other classes against Imperialism, the struggle of the peasantry against the landlords, the usurers and the Government, not even the struggle of the Indian capitalists against the domination of British finance capital.

The working class will only be able to fulfil its independent role as the leading and most militant opponent of Imperialism when it fully realises its own interdependence on those class forces which at this stage are tending to converge, however waveringly, on one focus namely the Anti-Imperialist issue.

It would be a strange irony in the history of class struggle if the Communists of all people were to blind themselves to these facts, if they were to delude themselves into imagining that class struggle means only a struggle of the working class, that other classes are not also in a state of conflict, that at one or another

stage the interests of one class may coincide with the interests of another, if the Communists were to fail to understand that such an alignment forms the basis for a purposive united front policy, that through the adoption of such a policy the working class can win allies in the struggle against its main enemy—Imperialism.

### **The Working Class must coordinate the Attack on Imperialism**

At present we are faced with a widespread, in fact nation-wide series of attacks on the citadels of Imperialism, varying admittedly in form and effectiveness according to their class origin and character. But the important thing for us to realise is that they are immeasurably weakened because they still remain scattered and uncoordinated attacks which the Imperialist Power has little difficulty in suppressing from whatever quarter they come, whether from the peasantry on questions of rent, taxes, debts, etc., whether from the working class through its trade-unions, or from the native bourgeoisie on such elementary but nevertheless vital questions of civil liberties, the tariff question, the rupee ratio. We should be making a big mistake if we imagined that these are not questions with which the working class is concerned.

But what is of vital necessity for the working class no less than every other section of the Indian people is the coordination of all forms of anti-Imperialist activity in a wide National Front of the people.

For the working class to adopt such a policy, to take the initiative in building up such a front does not mean that it abandons the struggle for its own class interests, its fight on the issues of wages, hours, factory conditions etc., and also against its exploitation by native capitalism.

On the contrary only in so far as it does fight consistently on these issues and against all forms of exploitation will it be able to build up its own strength and thereby strengthen the fight against live Imperialism. But the fight must be conducted on the "real issues of the workers that are commensurate with their fighting capacity at the given stage of development."

Thus we see that the independent role of the working class consists not in counterposing an independent programme of Soviet Power to the programme of National Independence, but in accepting the programme of National Independence as embodying its own vital demands for freedom and applying to this programme its own methods and forms of struggle.

The Party of the working class, will accept the slogan of Independence from whatever quarter it is advanced by it will be to the fore in popularising this programme and implementing it in action in the trade-unions and other mass organisations. It will contrast its own methods of struggle the strike, organised demonstrations, marches and other forms of extra-parliamentary mass action with the methods and forms of the bourgeoisie. Thus will it win the confidence and support of the masses and firmly establish its leadership.

### **The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution is the Immediate Step Towards Socialism**

Under no circumstances can this be taken to mean an abandonment of our ultimate objective of Soviet Raj, for it is only in this way, only through the living experience of the masses in their struggle for freedom and for their daily class interests that the soil can be prepared for the struggle for the Socialist Order. It does mean however that we are realists enough to understand that the working class is not in a position to set up Soviet Raj as its own immediate aim, that Socialism will never be realised in India without going through the preliminary stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution. This is the stage that lies immediately ahead of us and for which the working class must make alliance with all Anti-Imperialist forces in short-term agreements just as it has done in the past in every colonial, feudal, or semi-feudal country in the world and as it is doing in Spain at the present time.

Not until we have fully understood this shall we as a Party break free from all traces of sectarianism, from that internal political controversy, those factional disputes which render us ineffective and isolate us from the working class and the masses in general. Only when we have launched out ourselves into serious



day to day mass work shall we be able to understand how to advance a genuine mass policy for the anti-Imperialist movement related to the burning needs of the masses at the present time, and shew to all other sections of the anti-Imperialist movement what working class fight really means. Only then will the working class be able to lead not in theory but in deeds the struggle for life and liberty against the gradual strangulation of all sections of the Indian people by their common enemy, Imperialism.

Let us quote again the words of Dimitrov at the VII Congress.

“We want our parties to come out and act as real political parties of the working class, to become in actual fact a political factor in the life of their countries, to pursue at all times an active Bolshevik mass policy and not confine themselves to propaganda and criticism and bare appeals to struggle for proletarian dictatorship. We are enemies of all cut and dried schemes. We want to take into account the concrete situation at each moment, in each place and not according to a stereotyped form anywhere and everywhere, not to forget that the position of the Communists cannot be everywhere identical.”

Even within the borders of our own country there are varying circumstances and the position of the Communists is not the same in every province, for this reason our Central Committee has rightly sought not to impose any detailed cut and dried scheme for United Front to be universally applicable. Conditions and forms of struggle, our tactics in relation to the Bourgeoisie, the Congress right wing, the Congress rank and file, the CSP, the non-Congress peasant or communal organisations will vary from province to province according to particular local circumstance. These are questions on which our comrades in each province must exercise their initiative and the understanding that will come to them by participation in actual struggle alongside the masses themselves.

Nevertheless certain broad principles outlined above are universally applicable.

When faced with the question how are the masses to be mobilised for a nationwide struggle against Imperialism, we have been tempted in the past to evade the complex problems which this question presents in precisely the way that Dimitrov has warned us that we must not by seeking refuge in a stereotyped scheme, by advancing a general slogan such as "All Power to the producing masses," "All Land to the toiling peasants," etc.

Faced with a situation in which the right bourgeois leadership has failed to arouse the masses for a fight against Imperialism on the basis of their own day to day demands we jumped to the opposite extreme which Dimitrov has characterised as "Sectarianism", as "overestimating the revolutionisation of the masses, overestimating the speed at which they are abandoning the positions of reformism.....attempts to leap over difficult stages and complicated tasks of the movement.....Methods of leading the masses replaced by methods of leading a narrow party group. The power of traditional contacts between the masses and their organisations and leaders has been underestimated, and when the masses did not break off these contacts immediately the attitude taken towards them was just as harsh as that adopted towards their reactionary leaders. Tactics and slogans have tended to become stereotyped ..... the necessity of stubborn struggle in the very midst of the masses themselves to win their confidence has tended to be ignored."

### **Link up Day to day Struggle with the Wider National Movement**

Here in India we must understand, then that it will only be at an *advanced* stage of their political struggle that the masses will learn to echo such a slogan as "All power to the producing masses" as *their own fighting slogan*. Meanwhile the leadership of the Communist Party cannot be attained by a "process of spontaneous development."

Our place is inside the organisations of the workers and peasants. seriously taking account of the most pressing needs of the workers today, tomorrow and the next day "soberly appraising the situation not on the basis of our wishes but on the basis of the

actual state of affairs.” “We must not” said Lenin, “regard that which is obsolete for us as obsolete for the class as being obsolete for the masses.”

### **Organisation of the Peasantry**

Similarly with regard to the peasant movement—before the peasant masses have gained the strength and the will to make the “social ownership of the land” a real live issue for which they will fight they have got to learn the need for solidarity for militant action against the worst excesses of a Barbarous Imperio-Feudalism and this again will only come through their own experience through the testing and feeling of their own strength in a host of small local struggles on day to day issues, the lessons for example of united action in a particular village against particular acts of police terror in the collection of rents, taxes, debts etc., and the development of these local struggles through peasant marches and demonstrations to a broader united attack on more general issues.

Then we must learn to link up the struggle for Independence on a nationwide scale with these local and particular demands of the peasantry in their own districts.

We must learn to mobilise them on the basis of their own *local* and *specific* grievances, against the excesses of particular landlords, money-lenders etc., particular land tenure systems in their own district or province. However elementary or local a particular working class or peasant demand may appear to us we must learn how to support it, how to lead the movement that grows up around it, for it is in this way that powerful mass movements develop, and only in this way shall we be able to lead them in actual practice, here and now. Only in this way shall we fulfil the tasks on which Comrade Dimitroff was so insistent. Only in this way shall we win the confidence and support of the masses and succeed in “training and developing cadres connected with the masses, enjoying the confidence of the masses, cadres whose revolutionary mettle has been tried and tested in class battles.” *And unless we can do this there is a very real danger of our Party losing contact with the masses, becoming obsessed by “methods*

of leading a narrow Party group” as opposed to methods of leading the masses.

This too is undoubtedly what Comrade Tambe means when he speaks of “The need for you to turn out more and throw your energy into mass Trade Union, peasant and youth work.

### **Our Party Literature**

Finally a word in reference to our Party literature: This instead of being so much concerned with internal theoretical discussion, with what Dimitrov calls “the methods of leading a narrow party Group” must concern itself more with the methods of leading the masses. We must learn to take up those burning issues that confront the masses in their day to day life, posing them in a Marx-Leninist way but in language that the masses can understand and linking them up with the wider issues that confront the anti-Imperialist Movement. Similarly we must learn mercilessly to expose all attempts to sabotage unity amongst the masses, to smother militant and extra-Parliamentary mass action. And this we must do by drawing out the lessons of living experience not merely by abuse, not merely by reference to the past or to events in other countries but also in the present experience of day to day events in India.

A healthy change in this respect should become more and more apparent if we are at all serious in applying the VII Congress line in our actual mass work.

### **For immediate tasks immediately**

The immediate task facing us today, therefore, is this mobilisation of the masses on the basis of the demands which are intelligible to them, for which they have both the capacity and the urge to fight. Let us keep clear our ultimate goal of Socialism, of Soviet Power, but let us not delude ourselves that we can reach the goal without passing through the necessary intermediate stage of national democratic revolution and the actual fulfilment of its *IMMEDIATE* tasks. We, as Communists, as the most unyielding anti-Imperialist fighters, cannot take the stand that we will have nothing to do with those who stand only for national

independence, who do not for a programme of full-fledged agrarian revolution. The fact that national independence is the immediate step towards Socialism, that the partial struggles of the vast majority of people be connected with the national independence struggle presents us today with the possibility of developing the widest possible United National Front. *To Develop This United National Front On The Basis Of Immediate Partial Demands Is Not To Give Up Our Ultimate Goal Of Socialism But The Only Road Towards It.* To bring the working class to fight for such intermediary programme is not to relegate the working class to the background or "to tie it to the tail of the bourgeoisie" but the only way to give it its rightful place of leadership in the anti-Imperialist struggle.

Our main intention in the formation of unity alliances is not the proximity or disparity between our ultimate aims and those of our allies but whether such an alliance in fact tends *to weaken the enemy* now in our immediate fight.

The urgent task, therefore, for us is to become the best organisers and fighters for the immediate demands of the masses, to come forward as the most consistent exponents of National United Front, who will not allow any differences about ultimate goal to keep the masses divided in the immediate struggle, as the Party which will be with the masses at every stage of their consciousness and will be able to lead them to ever higher forms of struggle and thus *in actual deeds and not merely in words prove ourselves to be the vanguard of the revolutionary working class, as the most advanced and serious fighters against Imperialism.*

"The opportunists and sectarians from the left and right, among them hidden agents of the police, will criticise the new line which arises from the decisions of VII Congress. This must not disconcert you. You can state outright that you are applying a new line in accordance with the demands which are raised before the emancipation movement by the interests of our people at the present stage." (Tambe, January, 1937).

## For the United National Front

### Statement of the Polit-Bureau, Central Committee, Communist Party of India

#### Growth of the United Front

The United Front In India has already had a certain degree of success. The unification of the Girni Kamgar Unions in Bombay followed by the unification of both Trade Union Congresses is playing an important role in the consolidation of the United Front of the working-class. However, certain incorrect interpretations of the tasks of the anti-Imperialist front hinder the further development of the united front movement. What are the tasks of the anti-Imperialist struggle and united national front in India? What is the position of the Communists with regard to the various currents and cross-currents interacting on the national scene? These are questions which have to be answered in order to lay a solid base for the further development of the movement.

#### The Struggle for Socialism is the Struggle for Independence and Democracy

What is the main task confronting the anti-Imperialist front? We believe that what the Indian people are primarily interested in is the main task of the anti-Imperialist front. This task is *the liberation of the Indian people and the introduction of a democratic regime*. This task arises from the whole history of the movement of the last ten years. The first impetus to the growth of the mass movement after the development of 1919-1922 was given in 1927 by the boycott of the Simon Commission. The question of the Constitution was continuously on the order of the day, in one form or another throughout all the years of stormy development of mass struggle which followed. Today a big

section of the masses is united by the National Congress for struggle against the slave Constitution. But the struggle against the Constitution, imposed on the people by British Imperialism, means a struggle for democracy which does not exist in India. And the slogan generalising this struggle is the slogan for *Constituent Assembly*.

The question may be asked: but the Communists are for the Soviets, for Socialism. Is not the struggle for democracy in contradiction to the agitation for Socialism and Soviet Power?

It is not in contradiction to it. The struggle for Socialism presupposes the struggle for democracy. The Communists stand for the programme of the Communist International. This programme places as the ultimate aim of the revolutionary movement throughout the world, the establishment of Soviet Power, Socialism and Communism. In their agitation and propaganda the Communists educate the toilers, and first and foremost, the working-class of the countries, in this spirit. They will continue to do so in the future. But the degree of maturity of the revolutionary movement in the various countries is different. In India, today, the question is not the abolition of Capitalism and the establishment of a Socialist Soviet Republic, but the liberation of the country from its subjection to British Imperialism, the establishment of a democratic regime. In other words India is confronted with the task of carrying out the *bourgeois democratic revolution*. One of the most beautiful and one of the richest countries in the world, it is doomed to play the role of the coolie of British Imperialism, without the right to vote, not only in international matters but even at home. Is a real struggle for Socialism possible without freedom, without the right of the Indian people to be masters in their own house. Jawaharlal Nehru is quite right when he says that there can be no Socialism without national liberation. To educate the working-class of unswerving loyalty to the cause of Socialism, to show them by example of the victorious Socialist order in USSR; the advantages of Socialism, while organising the struggle of the working-class for the daily class interests...to teach them to

struggle for Socialism when the time comes, . . . all this is a very essential task of the Communists. The fight for freedom is not only compatible with this task but is obligatory for Socialists and Communists, for only through this struggle can the soil be prepared for the struggle for the Socialist order.

### **Link up the Fight for Independence with the Day-to-Day Struggle of the Masses**

But the demand for a democratic system and a Constituent Assembly will remain a mere phrase if this demand is not closely linked up with the *daily struggle for the democratic rights of the people*, against the arbitrary coercive suppression of the rights by the Anglo-Indian Government. If the people do not wrest one democratic right after another from the Government, if the forces of the people are not moulded together by frequent fights with the enemy, it will never be possible to accumulate the forces for the great struggle for the complete liberation of India. For the great majority of the population the questions of a democratic regime, the Constituent Assembly, the withdrawal of the Slave Constitution, will remain obscure if it does not see the inter-connection of these general demands with their everyday life.

Only when they have their own Government, elected in conformity with the will of the people, will the police stop whipping the peasant for non-payment of taxes and rent. But it is possible and necessary *now* to fight against the whipping of peasant in police stations, against all kinds of police lawlessness in town and country. Only the combining of hundreds of thousands of millions of such small separate struggles against all forms of Imperialist oppression with large scale action for the withdrawal of unlawful laws, like the famous Regulation III, 1818, against the prohibition of Indians to carry arms, for elementary democratic rights (freedom of assembly, unions, press, etc.) and particularly against the fact that 87 per cent of the population are deprived of the right to vote . . . only this kind of combination can give a real sweep to the movement even greater than in previous campaigns of the Congress. *And the mass*



*character of the movement is the chief basis, for without the masses there is not and cannot be victory.*

### **Causes of our Failure in the Past**

Why is it that the Indian Communists, inspite of their heroic struggle and leading role in the strike movement of 1928 and 1929 lost their positions in the working-class in the following years? Because the tactics of the Communists in India in those years *under-estimated* the importance of partial democratic demands which deeply affected the workers, the peasants, the intellectuals, the small, and often, the middle capitalists; because the Indian Communists under-estimating the tremendous importance of participating and working in every mass movement were unable to "link themselves, to come closer, and even to a certain extent to merge with the wide mass of toilers, in the first place with proletarian and *also* with the non-proletarian toiling masses" (Lenin); because the Indian Communists *over-estimated* the revolutionary consciousness of the workers who participated in the strike struggle, particularly of those from the Gimi Kamgar Union, and leading a small revolutionary vanguard, considered themselves to be in the right when isolating themselves, under the pretext of its bourgeois character, from the mass National movement of 1930-1931.

At the VII Congress of the Comintern (Communist International), Comrade Dimitrov stated: "Sectarianism finds expression *particularly* in over-estimating the revolutionisation of the masses, in over-estimating the speed at which they are abandoning the positions of reformism, in attempts to leap over difficult stages and over complicated tasks of the movement."

The more resolutely we acknowledge our sectarian mistakes the better. We need not be ashamed of our past. We can come to the Indian workers and honestly tell them of our mistakes, tell them that we would be mere jabberers who have nothing in common with Marxism if, once having understood our mistakes we were not to change our tactics in the light of past experiences and of the new problems of today. This sort of self-criticism can only strengthen the forces of Communism in India.

### **Why We Oppose Non-Violence?**

In order really to carry out the United Front in practice, we Communists must reconsider our attitude towards the movement of Civil Disobedience. We Communists will never agree with the preachings of Gandhism, which demand that the people in their struggle for emancipation go no further than non-violent passive resistance.

And not, as Jawaharlal Nehru thinks (see his autobiography P. 407) because the Communists want to apply their philosophy "blindfold and without due regard to facts and conditions." On the contrary, adherence to Marxism-Leninism *obliges* us to take into account the concrete situation and national peculiarities. It is precisely the Bolsheviks, who for years carried on a struggle against the Russian Mensheviks and European Social Democrats who wanted to make all revolutions to the same pattern. Lenin wrote: "Our European philistines do not dream that the future revolutions in the countries of the East which are immeasurably more richly populated and which are immeasurably more outstanding for their varied social conditions will undoubtedly be more original than the Russian Revolution".

How do the peculiarities of Indian conditions express themselves in the questions we are now dealing with? In the fact that profound historical reasons fostered the wide development of the submissive psychology of non-resistance among the unarmed Indian people who have for centuries been forced to bend their backs to foreign conquerors. One would think that the task of all those who love their people would be passionately to fight for the liberation of the people from this psychology of submission, to educate them in the consciousness of human dignity, to prepare them to be ready heroically to defend their national rights with all means in their power. But instead of this Mahatma Gandhi, on the contrary, uses the tradition of shameful non-resistance in order to hold back the rising mass movement within the framework of civil disobedience and in the eyes of the masses to invest the principle of non-violence with the sacredness of a religious prejudice.

Until now Gandhi and his followers have, in the main, succeeded in doing this. However, was it really so easy for Gandhi to hold back the mass movement within the framework of passive resistance? Numerous facts from the history of the mass movement of the toilers of India show that sentiments exist and are growing in the minds of the Indian people which are entirely different from the surviving tendency of submissive subordination to coercion and oppression. Do we not know of numerous clashes with the forces of the Government when the hirelings of Imperialism suffered sorely from the "non-violent" blows of the workers and peasants? Remember Peshawar, Sholapur, remember Burma. Besides this, beginning with 1928, a whole class, the Indian proletariat, decisively rejected the Gandhi methods in their proletarian struggle! Why? Anyone who cares to look does not doubt that, in the struggle against capital the strikes (precisely *strikes* and not the Gandhist hartal) became the generally recognised and mighty weapon of the Indian working-class, not only in theory but also in practice. The Indian proletariat, it should be remembered, is also a section and an important section, at that, of the Indian people! And the latest demand of the Bombay students to introduce military training in the universities; does this show the "non-violent" spirit of the Indian Students? How then can it be said that the passive resistance of Gandhism "is peculiarly adapted to Indian conditions"? No, this cannot be said.

The opinion is usually current that it is either non-violent passive resistance or violence; no third way exists. It is thought that once the Communists are against limiting the people's struggle with non-violent resistance they are "for this very reason always and everywhere for the application of violence". There can be nothing further from the truth.

What is of utmost importance to us is that the struggle of the masses should not *stop* at passive resistance, that this struggle should pass from lower forms to higher, more active and effective forms... from boycotts to mass demonstrations, from demonstrations to strikes, from strikes to mass action by the people. Whether this struggle of the masses of the people for

liberation will lead to a violent clash of the people with their oppressors—and where and when—*depends not so much upon us, nor upon the masses of the people of India, as upon the Imperialist oppressors*. It is a known fact that the majority of the demonstrations with many thousands of participants take place peacefully if they are not attacked by the police. But it is also a fact, and a fact taken from Indian reality that practically not a single big demonstration since the time of Amritsar (not to speak of the "preconstitution" time) passed without being attacked by the bandit hirelings of the Government who used either lathis or rifles and sometimes even machine-guns. Is it in the interests of the people to fold their arms and submissively give themselves to the enemy to be beaten up and tortured? No. It is impossible to win concessions from the enemy, still less to defeat them by such behaviour.

Since the Communists are against individual terror, "Violence" has only one vital aspect for them: mass clashes with the enemies of the people. But the Communists know full well that, in practice, clashes of the people with the armed forces of the Imperialist Government are not always and everywhere in the interests of the people's liberation movement, that an appropriate situation and definite development in the revolutionary struggle, *definite organisational, and ideological training of the masses*, are necessary for this purpose. History knows of cases when Marx (on the eve of the Paris Commune) and Lenin (in the July days of 1917), warned the masses of the people against ill-timed, armed i.e., "violent" action.

### **Active as Against Passive Resistance**

What do the Communists object to? The Communists object to the Gandhi propaganda of the *inadmissibility of violence in principle* in the struggle of the people, against the ideological disarming of the 350 million people by a handful of exploiters and oppressors. (Joynson-Hicks states that "India was conquered by the sword and will be held by the sword.") We Communists consider that it is necessary to ~~make~~ the people conscious of the fact that violence against violence, against the oppressors, the

violent overthrow of the yoke thrust upon them, is just and necessary for there is no other path to freedom. To every provocation of the Imperialists, to every limitation of the elementary democratic rights of the people, the Communists demand not violence, (no special *conditions* are necessary for this), but *active* resistance (boycott, demonstrations, strikes—there are many forms of struggle) as against the Gandhi policy of folded arms.

Two important practical conclusions should be drawn from the above. Firstly the real fighters against Imperialism must not isolate themselves from the mass movement of civil disobedience. Secondly, only the tactful, insistent, comradely explanation to the masses of the incorrectness of the Gandhi methods *in the very course of struggle itself*, combined with their own experience will help them to free themselves from the influence of Gandhism.

The above point of view does not in the least prevent us from collaborating with other parties and groups in a United National Front of struggle against Imperialism. And here we should openly renounce the former intolerable attitude to possible allies of the revolutionary vanguard in the struggle for national liberation and for the democratic rights of the people. This struggle calls for such a colossal straining of all forces that anyone who hates foreign oppression, who sympathises with the suffering of the people, will surely find a place for himself in this struggle.

### **The United Front**

There is no doubt that the situation in India, at present, is particularly favourable for the organisation of a United anti-Imperialist Front. The Trade Union Centres have already united. There is a growing clamour among the peasantry for organisation. In the National Congress the Party of Congress Socialists is meeting with success, and a number of other groups have come closer to the position of the anti-Imperialist struggle. The great victories of Socialism in the Soviet Union are becoming more widely known to the Indian toilers. All this and also the success of the United Front in *France* and *Spain* cannot

but strengthen the striving of the masses of Indian people to go forward in a United Front against Imperialism.

This unification of the anti-Imperialist forces will naturally start from the organisations already existing. What are these organisations? In the main they are the National Congress, the Party of Congress Socialists, the Communist Party of India, the two Trade Union Centres (the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Federation of Trade Unions) and the peasant organisations. Already even joint agreement of the above organisations would give a tremendous impetus to the mass movements. Also the very first success of the anti-Imperialist Front would draw to it certain organisations of the Indian merchants and industrialists not to speak of the students' and other radical organisations. This is all the more possible as the United anti-Imperialist Front is not directed against the Indian middle-classes but puts, as its main task, the liberation of the country and the National regeneration of the great Indian people. It is, therefore, a genuine United *National* Front against British Imperialism. ✓

In order to carry out the United anti-Imperialist National Front in practice, the idea that one or another of the participants has the right to exploit the United forces, that one or another of the participants must win at the expense of the others must be discarded. It is understood that freedom of propaganda, the right to defend their point of view in a business like way holds good for all those parties participating in the United Front. The Communists will be the first to set an example of *readiness* to enter into any agreement as long as it means the strengthening of the anti-Imperialist struggle. The Communists want that out of the United anti-Imperialist Front the winners be not one party, but the millions of the Indian people.

In former articles we gave several immediate demands which, in our opinion, could be included in the platform of the United anti-Imperialist Front. But most probably each province will put up different demands. It will only be to the interests of the cause, if such platform of United Front action be drawn up in the localities which take into account the local conditions. In the

localities where the labour and peasant movement is strong it will undoubtedly leave its imprint on such local platforms of action and the organs of the United Front (or local organisations of the National Congress) will also have to include the partial demands of the workers and peasants.

### **The Demand for a Constituent Assembly our Main Democratic Demand**

The main general slogan of this broad platform of action will be the slogan for Constituent Assembly. Even today this slogan is regarded as practical by almost all the important organisations who are possible participants in the United National Front. There was a time when the Communists refused to recognise this slogan then raised by Roy. Why? Because Roy substituted this slogan for propaganda for Socialism, the propaganda for Revolution, the propaganda for general strike, "It is useless" wrote Roy in the appeal to the Calcutta Congress of the Trade Union Congress (in the middle of 1931) "to adopt high sounding resolutions on general strikes and declare your intention of establishing a Socialist Republic..... It is not necessary to tell the masses from the very start that they can only obtain an improvement of their present hard lot.....through revolution".

This is absolutely incorrect. To stop carrying on propaganda for revolution and Socialism, to hide the programme of the Communist Party from the masses, as Roy demanded, means to renounce Marxism, to become an ordinary bourgeois democrat. We, not knowing how to combine the slogan for a Constituent Assembly with propaganda for the slogan of Soviets and Socialism, incorrectly came out against the demand for a Constituent Assembly. Moreover the demand for a Constituent Assembly means that the free Indian people, having thrown off the yoke of Imperialism must themselves, on the basis of the widest democracy, decide what system, what Constitution, what Government they want. It is precisely because of this that the slogan for a Constituent Assembly generalises all the democratic demands of the Indian people and the whole of its struggle for individual democratic rights.

The slogan for a Constituent Assembly is the best slogan to oppose the slave Constitution which British Imperialism has thrust on to the Indian People *against its will*.

**DOWN WITH THE SLAVE CONSTITUTION!  
LONG LIVE THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!**

Under this slogan the masses in their millions can and must organise in a United National Front of struggle, for the democratic liberation of the people, against Imperialist oppression.

February, 1937.



## The Indian Elections

Ben Bradley

The elections which have just taken place under the New Constitution of India are of far-reaching importance both to the mass of the people of India and also to the people of this country. *Although only a fraction of the Indian people are consulted, these elections are regarded as a plebiscite of the people. Every Congress candidate who stood for election was pledged to oppose and combat the new Constitution. Thus with the overwhelming majorities secured, the people of India have said decisively, "We do not want this Constitution."*

In the Provincial Elections, out of 11 Provinces, the Congress have secured a majority in 6 ; while in 3 other Provinces they have sufficient strength to make impossible the functioning the Government.

April 1st. is the day on which the Government intend to inaugurate the New Constitution in the Provinces. On this day the Indian National Congress have decided to call a nation-wide *Hartal* or General Strike. The three hundred and fifty odd million people of India are moving. A new stage is being entered in the march towards India's freedom.

The importance of this fact will be obvious to all, but what may not be obvious is why do the Indian people reject in such a manner this new Constitution? I will, therefore, present some facts so that a fuller appreciation can be obtained of the present attitude of the people of India towards the new Constitution.

## **The Simon Commission**

On November 8, 1927 Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy, announced the appointment by the British Government of the Indian Statutory Commission, commonly called the Simon Commission. Starting with this Simon Commission, which consisted of 7 members of Parliament, Liberal Labour, Conservative, and which visited India twice, it has taken the Imperial Government altogether almost 10 years to devise and perfect its New Constitution for India.

The job of this Commission was to enquire into the working of the system of Government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India and matters connected therewith, and

“To report as to whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible Government, or to extend, modify or restrict the degree of responsible Government then existing, including the question whether the establishment of second chambers of the local legislatures is or is not desirable.”

Subsequently, Sir John Simon secured an extension of these terms of reference to enable the Commission to examine the methods by which future relationships between the Indian States and British India might be adjusted.

The Simon Commission was met everywhere in India with opposition and boycott. The overwhelming majority of the Indian people refused to admit the authority of a British Parliamentary Commission to decide their destiny. Despite this opposition, however, the British Government went ahead, and the following were the main stages in the preparation of the present Constitution.

## **The Communal Award**

The Simon Commission worked from 1927 to 1930 and its report was issued in June of the latter year. This report was followed by the First Round Table Conference in November, 1930, and a Second Round Table Conference in September, 1931, which concluded its deliberations on August 17, 1932, when the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, announced the decision of the British Government on the nature and extent of representation to be accorded to the different communities in the new scheme of constitutional reform in the Provinces.

The proposals became known as MacDonald's Communal Award, on of the most reactionary features of the New Constitution. This Communal Award provided for separate electorates for different communities, and even for sub-dividing Communities, as in the case of the Hindu Community. It was calculated that the creation of these separate electorates would have the effect of so dividing the Indian people, and consequently of developing antagonisms, that it would become impossible for them to give a united expression of opinion.

Mr. MacDonald's scheme of representation provides for separate constituencies for Mahommedans, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans. Qualified voters of the depressed classes (Untouchables), in the terms of the Award, vote in General Constituencies, but a number of seats are assigned to them which will be filled by election from special constituencies in which voters belonging to the depressed classes only vote. There are also provided special seats for women, specifically divided among the various communities concerned. The special constituencies for depressed classes were obviously devised to divide the Hindu Community, which is the majority community in India.

### **Responsibility of Legislatures**

The Third Round Table Conference met towards the end of 1932, and the publication of the White Paper in March, 1933, marked the conclusive stage of the Round Table Conference. The White Paper formed the basis of discussion by a Joint Committee of Parliament. The proposals put forward in the White Paper assumed that the Government of India Act, 1919, would be repealed, as the "Conception of a Federation of States and Provinces, and the process involved in its formation, necessitate a complete reconstruction of the existing Indian Constitution."

The scheme laid down that the British Indian Provinces would be converted into autonomous units; that each Province would be equipped with Legislatures, elected by a wider electorate (that is, raising the franchise from approximately 3 per cent to 13 per cent.), and a Council of Ministers besides Governors. In order to ensure the continuance of Imperialist supremacy, the Governor, on behalf

of the King, will exercise executive authority in the Provinces, while the Council of Ministers will be responsible to the Provincial Legislatures and electors.

But in connection with this last point the Constitution contains numerous reservations and safeguards, together with the grant of special and extraordinary powers to the Governor for intervention. Therefore, the idea of the Council of Ministers of the Provincial Legislatures being responsible to the electors is nullified.

### **The All India Federation and the Princes**

A step of most profound importance made in the White Paper is the proposal to bring together the British Indian Provinces and the Indian States into an All India Federation. The Federal Legislature is to consist of two Houses representative of Indian States and British Indian Provinces. It is in this manner that the British Government intend to draw in the Princes as their allies. In the Lower House, out of 375 seats 125 will be reserved for the Indian States, and in the Upper House, of 260 seats 104 will be reserved for Indian States. British Imperialism will thus be ensured of the support of a bloc of most reactionary elements, which will be used to prevent the popular opinion in India gaining a majority in the Federal Council.

Whilst the Princes will retain their internal autonomy, and continue their autocratic rule, they will have to surrender a small part of their present sovereign rights to the Federation. Under the chairmanship of the Maharajah of Patiala, the Hydari Committee and Constitutional Committee, on March 2, 1937, considered the relationship of the Indian States to the Federation. The Chamber of Princes are now asking the British Government to accept 4 general provisions, safeguarding their interests, which they ask in each case to be made clear in the following way :

Nothing in this Instrument affects the continuance of my sovereignty in and over this State, or, save as provided by the Instrument or by Federal Law, the continuance of any powers, authority or rights, and the exercise thereto, save as above reserved for me.

The Chamber of Princes can make their conditions for entry into the Federal Government, conditions which we have little doubt the British Government will accept, while the New Constitution with all its impositions is steam-rolled across the Indian people.

### **Dictatorial Powers or Safeguards**

How complete imperialist control will be over the Legislatures can be best understood from the following : The Governor-General and the Governors are invested with powers which may be exercised at any time in the spheres of self-government, at the Centre and in the Provinces, if in their discretion they deem it essential. The Governor-General will have special responsibility in the maintenance of the financial stability and credit of India. In connection with this there is the establishment, removed from any possibility of political control, of a Reserve Bank and a Statutory Railway Board. The most important matters of Defence and Foreign Affairs will be special responsibilities of the Governor-General.

Following the issue of the White Paper, a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament was appointed in April, 1933. The Joint Parliamentary Committee was representative of the three main political parties. The most notable changes made by the Joint Committee to the White Paper proposals were:

- (1) the introduction of the principle of indirect election to both Houses of the Federal Legislature, which was modified in the case of the Upper House;
- (2) the establishment of Second Chambers in Bombay and Madras, besides Bengal, Bihar and United Provinces;
- (3) the tightening of the safeguards regarding Police, Commercial discrimination and Reserve Bank;
- (4) the granting of Parliament a voice in the framing of Orders in Council, thus preventing any radical changes, especially through interference of the House of Lords.

These dictatorial powers or "safeguards" fully justify the statement made by Sir Samuel Hoare in Parliament when he was endeavouring to convince the Diehard Opposition that in reality

not even the shadow of self-government was being given to the Indian people. He said:

“these safeguards are not paper safeguards. They are safeguards with sanctions behind them, with effective executive action to be put into effect if need arises.” (Hansard, December 10, 1934. p.56)

The Labour Party worked through all the stages, from the Simon Commission, but on February 5, 1935, Mr. C.R. Attlee, on behalf of the Opposition in the House of Commons, moved the following:

In the opinion of this House no legislation for the better Government of India will be satisfactory which does not secure the goodwill and co-operation of the Indian people by recognising explicitly India's right to Dominion Status, and by providing within it the means of its attainment, and which does not by its provisions as to franchise and representation, secure to the workers and peasants of India the possibility of achieving by constitutional means their social and economic emancipation. This was defeated.

The Government of India Bill received the Royal Assent on August 2, 1935—the longest Act in the history of Parliament.

### **Indian People Unsubdued**

The whole period of preparing the New Constitution was one of unrest in India. On the day the Simon Commission arrived in India it was met by Black Flag demonstrations and boycott. This was followed by the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 onwards, when thousands of the people of India were thrown into prisons. On the North-West Frontier, at Sholapur and other places, people were shot down by the armed forces of the British Government. The Indian National Congress and other organisations were declared illegal. The British Government during this period were following a “dual policy” of carrying on discussions and enquiries in connection with the constitutional reforms, while India was being ruled by ordinances and executive orders.

This bitter struggle, entailing considerable sacrifices on the part of workers and peasants, continued. The character of the New Constitution has amply justified this struggle, and although the

Civil Disobedience Movement was called off in 1933, the mass of Indian people remained unsubdued.

### **Resolution on Constitution**

The first Indian National Congress Session held after the calling off of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bombay, declared against the New Constitution. Its rejection was reaffirmed at the Lucknow Session in April, 1936, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. In December last the Faizpur Session was held, also under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, when the following resolution was passed:

The Congress reiterates its entire rejection of the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Constitutions that has been imposed on India against the declared will of the people of the country. In the opinion of the Congress any co-operation with this Constitution is a betrayal of India's struggle for freedom and a strengthening of the hold of British Imperialism and a further exploitation of the Indian masses who have already been reduced to direct poverty under imperialist domination. The Congress therefore repeats its resolve not to submit to this constitution or to co-operate with it, but to combat it, both inside and outside the legislatures, so as to end it. The Congress does not and will not recognise the right of any external power or authority to dictate the political and economic structure of India, and every such attempt will be met by organised and uncompromising opposition of the Indian people. The Indian people can only recognise a constitutional structure which has been framed by them and which is based on the independence of India as a Nation and which allows them full scope for development according to their needs and desires.

The Congress stands for a genuine democratic State in India where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the Government is under their effective control. Such a State can only come into existence through a Constituent Assembly, elected by adult suffrage, and having the power to determine finally the Constitution of the country. To this end the Congress works in the country and organises the masses.

and this objective must ever be kept in view by the representatives of the Congress in the legislatures.

The Congress endorses the Election Manifesto of the A.I.C.C. (All India Congress Committee), and calls upon all candidates, standing on its behalf, to carry on their election campaign strictly on its basis and, after the election, to conduct their work in the legislatures in accordance with it. Congress members of the legislatures should take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new Assemblies the demand for a Constituent Assembly, elected by adult suffrage, and this demand should be supported by mass agitation outside to enforce the right of the Indian people to self-determination.

The question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office by Congress members elected to the legislatures under the new constitution will be decided by the A.I.C.C. as soon after the provincial assembly elections as is practicable. Immediately after the elections the various Provincial Congress Committees will take steps to consult their district and other local Committees and send their own recommendations on this subject, so that the A.I.C.C. may be assisted in deciding this issue by the opinion of the mass of Congressmen and the country.

This was the Clear lead which the Indian National Congress gave the country. Jawaharlal Nehru in his Presidential Address referred to the Government of India Act as "The new Character of Bondage" which was being imposed upon the despite complete rejection. He said that the Congress was going "to the Legislatures, not to co-operate with the apparatus of British Imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British Imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people."

### **Preparation for Elections**

The Indian National Congress was the only organisation which put up candidates on an all India basis. In order to co-ordinate all elements who desired to contest the elections on the Congress ticket, and facilitate the election campaign, the Congress established the All India Congress Parliamentary Board. The duty



of this Board was to select from among the prospective candidates nominated for a constituency the person who would be endorsed as the Congress candidate.

The conduct both of the Central and Provincial Parliamentary Boards in selecting candidates tended towards the selection of individuals of Right-wing tendency, and in some cases persons were endorsed who had consistently opposed the Congress. It is necessary to note this fact because it has a bearing on the character of the representatives who have been elected on the Congress ticket.

In connection with this a certain amount of friction has been caused. In Bombay in two Labour constituencies the Trades Union Congress nominated R.S. Nimbkar and K.N. Joglekar as the candidates. Both nominees were Congressmen and their names were suggested to the Parliamentary Board as suitable persons. The Parliamentary Board, however, refused to accept the nominations and, in one of the constituencies, endorsed the candidature of Dr. Gilder who had on previous occasions opposed the Congress. Similar incidents happened in Nagpur, Bengal and Madras. As a result loyalty to the Indian National Congress has been severely strained and suspicion aroused as to the sincerity of certain persons contesting elections on the Congress ticket. Protests have been made both by the Congress Socialist Party and the Trades Union Congress to Jawaharlal Nehru, in connection with the work of the Parliamentary Board. Fortunately, there were only a few cases where disagreement resulted in contest between supporters of the Congress standing either on a T.U.C. or Independent ticket against the endorsed Congress candidate.

However, the preference shown in some cases by the All-India Parliamentary Board for loyalists and ex-Government nominees as against Socialists and anti-Imperialists, has created difficulties in the way of the United Front, while it has strengthened those sections who would cooperate in working the New Constitution.

### **Government Interference**

The striking successes of the Congress candidates in the elections are all the more remarkable when one takes into consideration the efforts of the Government to sabotage the Congress campaign.

From the outset of the election campaign, the administration did its best to prevent Congress successes wherever possible. Methods of intimidation, interference, repression and banning of meetings were employed.

In the North-West Frontier Province the Congress was declared an illegal organisation and its leader, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, refused permission to return to his home. Despite this, the Congress succeeded in winning 19 seats out of a total of 50.

Under the minorities and reserved seats system in four Provinces, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh, Bengal and the Punjab the seats were so allocated that Congress majorities are almost impossible. In these same provinces cases of official interference were the heaviest.

In the Karnataka Province such an order was issued: "You should announce in the village that a permit should be secured from us if a Kisan (Peasant), Prabhat Pheri (public meeting, procession), is to be organised in the village in connection with the Congress election campaign. An Order (No.....5.1.37) from the District Police Officer has been received. Henceforth a permit is absolutely necessary for the above mentioned purposes."

This order speaks for itself and it is understood that such orders have been issued throughout India. Further, it should be noted that Congress alone was under obligation to get such permits.

### **Instructions to Vote Anti-Congress**

In the United Provinces an amazing circular came to light. The circular passed between officials of the Court of Wards in the United Provinces; it referred to the elections and stated that Congress candidates must be defeated and that all votes controlled by the Court of Wards must be cast against them. Subsequently an official apology was given.

The Court of Wards is a private body, but the whole official hierarchy is used to staff it. Thus the suggestion that all votes controlled by the Court of Wards should be cast against the Congress was in fact a suggestion emanating from Government officials.

The circular in question was dated July 9, 1936, and was sent by the Secretary of the Court of Wards, U.P., to all district officers in the United Provinces. One passage reads as follows:

It is essential in the interests of the class which the Court of Wards specially represents and of agricultural interests generally, to inflict as crushing a defeat as possible on the Congress with its avowed Socialist principles. The Court has therefore decided to support in each constituency the candidate who (a) will actively oppose the Congress candidate, and if elected, the Congress programme, and (b) would have the greatest chance of success if the Court of Wards remained neutral.

The District officers are instructed to engage themselves in a systematic survey of the Province, constituency by constituency, and prepare themselves in support of the loyalist candidate in each constituency.

Another example in from Hubli, where a huge Congress election cloth poster was removed from their offices by order of the Collector of the District. "A huge Congress election poster of cloth spread across the street high in the air in front of the Congress election office has been removed early this morning, it is alleged, by some Municipal sweepers. The perpetrators of the outrage are alleged to have stated they were removing the poster under the orders of the collector. The order, it is alleged, was not produced when demanded by the workers present in the office at that time and requests of Congress workers to wait till the arrival of the Congress authorities were not heeded by the alleged perpetrators. Dr. Hardikar and other Congress authorities, when informed of the outrage, quickly arrived on the spot and found the poster lying crumbled near by in the dustbin. The poster was photographed."

### **Congress Election Campaign Obstructed**

In general, in every place officials were throwing all kinds of obstacles into the way of Congress election work. Many leaders were prosecuted suddenly for sedition, etc. Others found their movements and rights of free speech scandalously restricted, the notorious Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code being abused for this purpose.

In some Provinces the Government even publicly canvassed against Congress candidates.

It is understood that the procession advertised to be taken out in Peshawar City in support of the candidature of Mr. Abdul Quaiyum (Congress) was banned by the District Authorities.

Jawaharlal Nehru issued a statement from Lucknow on February 5 that he had seen a circular issued by the Chief Secretary to the United Provinces Government directing District Officers to take action under Section 108, Cr. P.C. against Congress workers engaged in Congress work on the ground that they were preaching sedition.

By using the Special Powers conferred upon the Provincial Governors, the Governor of Madras disqualified the South Indian Railway Workers' Union, thus disenfranchising 37,000 workers; and the Governor of Bombay disqualified the Gimi Kamgar Union with a membership of over 7000.

Despite these difficulties and obstacles the Indian people have shown by the election results their decisive opposition to the new Constitution. The sweeping successes of the Congress candidates must have come as a violent shock to the Government who had hoped to show India split and divided.

### **Smashing Victories for United Front**

The successes achieved are due in no small degree to the call by Jawaharlal Nehru for National United Front and to the united efforts of the All India T.U.C., the Congress, Peasant, Peasant Organisations, Socialists and Communists. The Communist Party of India issued a striking appeal to "Transform the Elections into mighty Anti-Imperialist Demonstrations."

It is possible now to make a complete summary of the election results of the provincial Legislative Assemblies. The Congress has obtained absolute majorities in six of the eleven Provinces.

|                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Madras           | Congress 159 seats out of 215 |
| Bombay           | Congress 88 seats out of 175  |
| United Provinces | Congress 134 seats out of 228 |
| Bihar            | Congress 91 seats out of 152  |

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Orissa            | Congress 36 seats out of 60     |
| Central Provinces | Congress 71 seats out of 112    |
|                   | (Hansard, March 8, 1937, p.809) |

In three other provinces the Congress is the strongest single party: in Bengal with 60 seats out of 250, in Assam 40 seats out of 108, and in North-West Frontier, 19 seats out of 50. (The Congress in Bengal did not officially contest the Labour seats. The T.U.C. candidates gained all 7 seats with large majorities.)

The Congress has also captured an absolute majority in the Upper House of Madras, Bihar and Bombay.

Other groups of candidates were contesting the elections representing Communal organisations—Hindu, Sikh and Mahommedan. The National Agrarian Party (landowning class) was severely defeated in U.P. by Congress, and the Justice Party suffered a similar fate in Madras.

The very decisive expression of opinion is shown by the overwhelming majorities of which the following are a few examples. In Madras, V.V. Giri, Secretary of the All-India Railwaymen Federation, beat the Rajah of Bobilli (Chief Minister to Government of Madras) in his own Zamindary (where he is landlord) by a majority of over 7,000 votes.

### **Bengal (Labour Constituencies)**

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Suresh Chandra Banerjei (President, Bengal T.U.C.)           | <i>Majority</i><br>26,027 |
| Mrinal Kante Bose (T.U. Federation)                             | 3,022                     |
| Syed Mazher Abbas (Independent)                                 | 2,646                     |
| 2. Sibnath Banerjei (President, A.I.T.U.C., ex-Meerut Prisoner) | 20,197                    |
| T. Faiz Ahmed (T.U. Federation)                                 | 3,925                     |
| P.K. Mitter   | 1,049                     |
| B. Mukherjee  | 362                       |

### **Punjab (Peasant Constituency)**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Sohan Singh Josh (Socialist Independent, ex-Meerut Prisoner) | 7,140 |
| Lt. Sardar Raghubir Singh Rais (Landlord)                    | 2,825 |

### **United Provinces — Fyzabad East (Rural)**

Krisnath Kaul (Congress) 59,901

Pratap Singh (National Agrarian Party) 6,871

These are the results secured on a 13 per cent. franchise. What would have been the result if there had been universal adult suffrage?

The Majority votes registered for Congress Socialist, T.U.C. and Peasant candidates cannot fail to convey the grim determination of the people of India to achieve their emancipation. The Congress secured these striking majorities on a programme which pledges the Congress candidates to a policy of combating the Constitution coupled with an economic programme.

### **Peasant versus Landlord**

Some of the most important and striking successes were achieved in the agricultural constituencies where support was obtained for the Congress on its Election Manifesto, which stood for: Reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent, and for equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by the substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue, and exempting the uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

These were the immediate points in the programme, while a comprehensive programme of agrarian legislation is in preparation. Although this appeal was not on clear class lines, the elections in the agricultural districts developed into "Peasants versus Landlord." The peasants triumphed against the reactionary landlords in Bengal where the Krishak and Proja Party secured 40 seats.

### **Pledge for Independence**

In the six Provinces where the Congress have a majority, the question arises of the formation of a Ministry or accepting office. A decision for the acceptance of office could only be taken in order to bring an early and complete exposure of the fraud which is being perpetrated under the guise of a step towards Self-government.

The All India Congress Committee has since met and accepted, in an amended form, a recommendation of the Working Committee for the acceptance of office. The following resolution was adopted:

The A.I.C.C. authorises and permits acceptance of office in the provinces where Congress command a majority in the legislatures, provided that ministership shall not be accepted unless the leader of the Congress Party in the legislature is satisfied and able to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the office of ministers in regard to their constitutional activities.

The Socialists put up a stiff fight in the A.I.C.C., and the voting was 127 for and 70 against. The feeling was that the Right-wing were endeavouring to circumvent the decision of the Congress to combat the new constitution. In view of the decision the Socialists will insist upon an early fulfilment of the Congress Election pledges, particularly in reference to bringing relief to the peasantry by a reduction in rent and revenue.

On March the 19th over 800 delegates from every Province in British India meet in Delhi to attend the National Congress Convention. Pandit Nehru administered a pledge to these new members of the provincial legislatures that they would devote themselves, inside and outside the legislatures, working for the Independence of India. While he reiterated his hostility to the new Constitution he appealed for Unity and discipline.

Meanwhile preparations go ahead for the Hartal and General Strike throughout India which is called for April 1, the day on which the new Constitution is to be inaugurated, and mass meetings and demonstrations will take place.

### **Call for Immediate Action**

By the time this being read the mighty Indian people will have entered upon a new phase in their struggle for freedom. Already the unarmed Indian masses may once more be facing the armed might of British Imperialism. To imagine what this may mean we must recall what happened on the eve of the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms when a mass protest meeting held

in the Jallianwalla Bagh at Amritsar was fired upon and hundreds of people were killed in cold blood.

The New Constitution is designed to rivet more securely the chains of British Imperialism on the Indian people, and does not give even the shadow of Self-government. The demand of the people of India for freedom to be the arbiters of their own destinies is a just demand.

The situation is critical—immediate action is necessary. We must come to the support of the Indian people in this situation, recognising the right of India to decide her own destinies. Call upon the General Council of Labour to get in touch immediately with the Indian National Congress with a view to actively assisting them in the struggle. Let all working-class, democratic and peace organisations demand that the National Government must recognise this plebiscite of the Indian people with its overwhelming majority for rejection of the Constitution.

Unity between the British and Indian working classes is essential and must be established. The motion of the Labour Party rejecting the New Constitution in the House of Commons in February, 1935, the resolution of the Indian National Congress plus the crushing blow which the voters have registered in rejecting the Constitution all provide the basis for Unity. The United Front must be established against the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on a Nation.



## May Day 1937

The May Day of this year has come at a time when the creaking machinery of the Slave Constitution is being set in motion. The will of the people as expressed in the Congress majorities is being trampled underfoot. A handful of Meerjaffars, traditional henchmen and lick spittles of British Imperialist rulers, have formed 'interim' ministries. The refusal of the Governors to give the required assurance to the Indian National Congress (INC), with reference to the Special Powers, has with one stroke unmasked the true nature of the Constitution. *Its scanty democratic trappings have fallen off revealing the nakedness of its dictatorship.*

British Imperialism will not allow the INC leaders to handle and run the Constitution. What it demands of the INC is *not a face-saving formula but complete capitulation*, an abjuration of mass-struggle of every character. It wants to isolate the INC from its mass basis, that is, to destroy it, and retain for itself unchallenged and unfettered dictatorship and control over India's resources of men and money.

### British Imperialism in Panic Strikes Out

British Imperialism has grown panicky. The threat of War and Revolutions hangs like the sword of Democles over its head. The aggression of Germany and Italy in Europe, of Japan in the Far East, threaten its power and position in the world. On the other hand the growing strength of the United Front struggle against War and Fascism and for Democracy and Peace in Europe, and of the forces of Socialist and Nationalist Revolution in the USSR,

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Editorial of "THE COMMUNIST", organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, April 1937.

China and other Colonies, are a challenge to its Imperial rule in the colonies and its social structure at home. That is why it is pushing forward its Re-armament programme with such feverish haste. That is why it is seeking to consolidate its rule in the colonies by an unprecedented offensive and brutal terror.

The Election demonstrations and victorious results have struck terror into the hearts of British Imperialists. They have shown how a people united in a determined and consistent struggle against Imperialism, would sweep it away in no time, inspite of National traitors, inspite of its reactionary allies. They have shown that the tempo of struggle is once again on the rise.

With the inauguration of the New Constitution, British Imperialism has begun its new offensive. It aims at splitting and disrupting the forces of the United National Front against Imperialism before they consolidate themselves. It is proceeding to isolate and crush the most advanced and determined sections of the front, by concentrating the fire of repression against the militant organisations of workers and peasants, against genuine anti-Imperialist revolutionaries within and without the Congress. It hopes to get a few partial palliative measures passed through the hands of the new reactionary ministers, to take the wind out of the sails of the INC, to isolate from the INC its upper middle-class following and also give the reactionary Ministers a hearing before the masses—and thus undermine its electoral basis.

How shall we defeat this new offensive? How shall we foil this new effort to break our Unity and to crush in isolation the most determined and courageous fighter in the National Front—the working-class?

### **Deepen and Broaden the Mass Counter-Offensive**

The recent election campaign effected a broad political activation of the masses on a scale never witnessed before in India. Partial demands of workers, peasants and the other sections were put forward as a part of the general demand—National Independence, Constituent Assembly, Democratic Regime. The people as a whole were mobilised against the Slave Constitution

imposed by British Imperialism. In spite of the fact that the campaign was not always nor everywhere carried on the right lines, the response of the people was universal, their will to fight and to end the Constitution was unequivocal.

The country-wide Hartal and demonstrations on the Anti-Constitution Day, the strike of 40,000 textile workers in Bombay, and the success of aggressive mass enthusiasm, witnessed in the principal cities on that day, may rightly be said to be the beginning of a new round of struggles. The task today is to develop the campaign to wreck the Constitution into a veritable mass counter-offensive, broadening it and moulding it to higher forms of struggle and lead it on to final struggle. This means that the struggle must outgrow the limits of an election campaign, *and proceed on the basis of the partial and local struggles of workers and peasants, and of the broad sections of our impoverished people*, unifying and linking them up under the banner of the basic democratic slogans, raising them to the level of the struggle of the entire National Front against Imperialism.

Some Nationalist leaders have raised the slogan—"Prepare for re-elections." Undoubtedly, situations would shortly arise when fresh elections would have to be demanded and prepared for; but any pre-conceived scheme to chain the forces of growing struggle within the four corners of an election campaign would be a disaster. Any effort to crap and throttle the extra-parliamentary struggle which has begun, refusal to develop it into a mass-struggle not only to smash the Constitution, but smash Imperialist rule itself, would be a National betrayal.

### **Down with the Ministries**

"Down with the reactionary Ministers" thus must be the immediate slogan of action, on the basis of which we must set up a mass agitation. We must direct the attack against the landlord and capitalist reactionaries, who have come forward to uphold a Constitution of slavery and a regime of terror, a regime which means prisons and detention-camps to thousands of our patriots and fighters, which means the denial of elementary rights to the people, which spells poverty and unemployment for the

vast masses of our land. We must make this attack the lever for mobilising the masses for partial and local struggles for the attainment of the general demands laid down in Wardha Resolution and of the specific demands of the workers and peasants formulated by the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and the All-India Kisan Congress (AIKC).

### **The Call must ring out to the Masses**

"You cannot get your basic demands, you cannot overthrow the reactionary Ministers—the upholders of the charter of your slavery, you cannot wreck the Constitution itself unless *you yourself make a move*. It is only out of your local and partial struggles in towns and in the countryside that the general struggle of the people for National Independence and democratic rights can arise and grow". It is your independent class organisations—the workers and peasants unions, which would give a new stamp and a new vitality to the growing struggle against Imperialism.

### **United National Front**

*"Prepare for the rising mass-struggle—and not merely 'Prepare for the Re-election'"*—must be our general slogan at the present moment. In the course of this preparatory struggle we have not only to build up independent organisations of workers and peasants but also the INC itself—especially its primary units at the base. For the local INC units reorganised and revitalised by the living contact and co-operation of fighting organisations of workers and peasants would become the focal points of the United Front Struggle as it develops in localities. Thus will arise, unit by unit, the United National Front as the mighty Front of the people carrying on an uncompromising and an unrelenting struggle against Imperialist tyranny and for National emancipation.

Such are the immediate tasks which face the people and especially the working-class on the eve of this May Day.

*On this day, the day of proletarian struggle and solidarity, let the Indian Working-class proclaim its resolve to come forward as*

*the initiator, builder and the standard-bearer of the United National Front.* Let it demonstrate in action to the toilers and to the entire people, that it is not entering the United National Struggle as a class apart with a view to dominate and use it for its sectional interests but for the purpose of honestly and sincerely fighting for the whole programme of the United National Front. It must throw itself in the forefront of every campaign of struggle against the Constitution, must come forward as the most courageous fighter for the demands of the National Front and thus become the builder and the moulder of that Front.

### **United Front of the Working-Class: United Action Against the Bosses**

But the United Front rises and grows into a real fighting front only in the measure in which the working-class itself is able to achieve within its own ranks, to build up the United Front of the entire working-class against the new offensive of the capitalist and Imperialist bosses. The recent struggle of the Railway workers against dismissals and the increase in the time of work; the wide-spread strike struggle of the textile workers of Gujrat and Central India against wage-cuts has demonstrated the urgent need for United Action. Today it is the turn of the 80,000 Jute Mill workers of Bengal who are fighting back the wage-cut offensive, and are heroically attempting to unify and extend the struggle to the level of a general strike in the teeth of the most ruthless police repression and terror.

In the forefront of our May Day demonstration, we must place the question of the United Front Struggle of the workers in various industries—Railways, Cotton, Textile, Jute, Mining, etc., against the new offensive of wage-cuts and dismissals which the bosses have launched against them. We must call upon All Trade Union and Working-class organisations to pool their resources together, to hold joint conferences, elect joint Committees of Unity and Action for mobilising the broadest sections of the organised and unorganised workers in every one of these industries for a General Strike. We must emphasise the need for achieving Unity in the entire T.U. Movement—Unity based on

the urgency of a United Struggle to ward off the attack on the standard of living of the workers, to fight back the Imperialist repression which seeks to strangle the TU movement altogether. *It is these mighty strike struggles of the workers in the basic industries in India which are going to be the driving force in the new round of anti-Imperialist struggle which is ahead.*

ON MAY DAY WE DEMONSTRATE FOR the minimum demands of the working-class—8 hours day, Holidays with pay, minimum wage, etc., and for the basic democratic rights—freedom of organisation, strike, picketting, press and person. We demonstrate for the repeal of all anti-working-class legislations, of all repressive laws, for the release of all political and class prisoners, of all detenus and internees.

ON MAY DAY THE WORKERS FRATERNISE WITH THEIR BROTHERS, THE PEASANTS, calling upon them to hold joint meetings and demonstrations and taking the initiative to make them a success. We demonstrate our support to the charter of peasant demands of the AIKC and for a revolutionary brotherly alliance of workers and peasants against Imperialist rule and its capitalist and landlord allies. The peasant movement is on the upgrade. Peasant struggles are breaking out, here, there, and everywhere throughout the country. Peasant organisations are striking roots. We are proud of it all. The peasant struggle is an integral part, in fact the base, of the people's struggle for freedom. We pledge our unstinted supports to it.

### **Workers for an All-in May Day**

Let not the May Day demonstrations of this year be exclusively working-class celebrations. Already from last year the peasant organisations have begun to join in and themselves organise May Day demonstrations. We must strike to carry the May Day demonstration to the village and the countryside, and with it the message of struggle of the militant working-class. We must make every effort to get the Congress locals and Districts Committees to join the May Day demonstrations. Let us make this year's

May Day one in which workers, peasants and the people as a whole demonstrate their resolve to prepare for a mass-struggle to wreck the Constitution and to build up a mighty fighting alliance of all sections of the people opposed to it. Let the working-class organisations take the lead in making the May Day the day of the United National Front.

### **On this May Day 1937**

May Day is the parade of the proletarian army, when we review the lessons of our past battles and plan the next ones. We repeat our pledge to fight till victory is ours.

**WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!**

**SUPPORT THE SOVIET UNION AND SPAIN, AGAINST  
FASCISM AND IMPERIALISM.**

**AGAINST IMPERIALIST WARS: AGAINST MASSACRE OF  
THE MASSES: FOR PEACE AMONG PEOPLES.**

**DOWN WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM!**

**WRECK THE SLAVE CONSTITUTION:  
THROUGH MASS-STRUGGLE.**

**OVERTHROW THE REACTIONARY MINISTRIES!**

**FORWARD TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!**

**PEOPLE OF INDIA UNITE: INSIDE A UNITED NATIONAL  
FRONT.**

**PRESENT A PROLETARIAN UNITED FRONT: AGAINST  
THE BOSSES' OFFENSIVE.**

**PROLETARIANS AND PEASANTS FRATERNISE: FOR  
AND IN THE UNITED NATIONAL FRONT.**

**ALL FOR UNITY, STRUGGLE AND VICTORY!**

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## The Present Situation and Our Task

The events of the last few months have conclusively demonstrated that we are on the eve of a gigantic mass struggle. Perhaps never before in Indian history has there been such extensive mass radicalisation, never before such favourable conditions for all-sided United attack on Imperialist Rule.

### Extensive Radicalisation

The period between Lucknow Session of the National Congress and Faizpur was one exceptionally favourable for the strengthening of the Left forces. At the head of the National Congress was Jawaharlal who, in addition to his official position as Congress President, occupied a unique position in the country as being, next to Mahatma, the most influential and powerful national leader. And Jawaharlal at Lucknow and afterwards also generally threw his weight on the side of the Left. This gave a tremendous impetus to the Left forces which if properly utilised might have taken us a long way towards the transformation of the Congress into the anti-Imperialist Front of the Indian people. What the Left had to do was, organisational consolidation of the extensive radicalisation that had been proceeding. It gave whole-hearted support to Jawaharlal but this support could not be a *substitute* for organisational consolidation, i.e., the broadening of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) into a mass organisation of the Left, the building up of powerful working-class and peasant organisations and most important of all the transformation of the Communist Party from a small group of Trade Union (TU) leaders into an effective political force on all fronts—TU,



Congress, Peasant, Cultural. On the contrary this consolidation alone could make support to Jawaharlal effective, on the basis of this organisational development alone could the struggle for the freedom of our country be raised to revolutionary level.

### **Where the Left Failed**

Can we say that these tasks were carried out? On the TU Front very little organisational headway was made. The All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) Session meeting in Bombay in May '36 was the first United TUC Session after the Calcutta split. It laid down the basis of United Front between the organised working-class and the Congress. It expressed in unequivocal terms the determination of the working-class to fight the Slave Constitution. All these were necessary. But the TUC Session discussed very little the organisational weakness of the working-class movement and how to overcome it. The most serious problem—the problem of cadres, how to develop rank and file workers into effective working-class leaders, how to draw the radicalised Congressmen in the TU movement—was not discussed at all. The TUC stands to-day almost exactly where it did a year ago and this, at a period when gigantic working-class struggles—the biggest since 1934—are being fought. (B.N.Rly. Strike, Jute Strike). The spontaneously developing working-class movement has demonstrated all the more sharply our organisational weakness.

On the Peasant Front considerable headway was made notably in Behar. The All-India Kisan Sabha is fast developing into the central guiding organisation of a countrywide peasant movement. In Behar Kisan Sabhas on a militant class-basis have been formed in a large number of districts and most of them have basic units in Thanas. Outside Behar and Orissa and to a lesser extent Bengal and Andhra the Kisan movement is still in a nebulous state. The Karza Committees of Punjab have remained agitational bodies. In U.P., Maharastra and Gujrat Kisan Organisations are still in an extremely undeveloped state.

The CSP in spite of its increased influence has not gained proportionally in organisational strength. True, a number of

Provincial Party organisations (Punjab, Sind, Tamil Nad, N.W. Frontier) have been formed making the CSP more all-India in character than before but most of the basic organisations of the Party, the district and town Committees, are even today loose groups of individuals (many of whom—in Bombay at least 50%—do not even attend general Party meetings) instead of being activating force in the Congress, in the TUs, in the Student Organisations. Not only has the CSP not become a mass Party, some of its leaders even deny the necessity of such a transformation.

### **Lack of Organisational Strengthening**

We must frankly admit that we have, taking into account the favourable situation, failed to consolidate the growing influence of the Left, failed to give direction to the rising militancy of the masses.

This failure on the part of the Left enabled the Congress Right to water down and ultimately sabotage those resolutions of Lucknow which had any anti-Imperialist content. The most glaring example is the Mass Contact resolution. Over a year has passed and the Mass Contact Committee has not yet submitted its Report. The Right-wing which had set its heart on acceptance of ministry created the Parliamentary Board—the most concentrated expression of the reformist forces in the Congress which standing above the Congress dominated it and made it a tool to passively sanction and carry out its opportunist policy of alliances with reactionary elements.

The Left failed to carry the anti-Ministry struggle to a higher stage. It should have demanded the dissolution of the Parliamentary Board, it should have demanded that Congress candidates for the Assembly should be elected by primary conferences of Congressmen in each district, it should have vigorously denounced the Parliamentary Board which was violating the spirit of the Congress Election Manifesto. The CSP failed to do anything but register a mild protest in its organ. The Communist Party put forth these demands—but in December, 1936, i.e., when the nominations had already been made and the

slogans could no longer rally the masses. One of the chief reasons as to why the CSP at Faizpur failed to record even a formal protest against the policy of the Parliamentary Board was that it did not want to offend Jawaharlal who, it was known, did not favour a frontal attack on the Board.

The same thing had happened at the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting in August, 1936 when the CSP had refrained from criticising the Congress Election Manifesto or even move for the incorporation of a platform of concrete mass demands in the Manifesto because Jawaharlal had drafted it.

These two incidents show clearly how in the absence of organisational consolidation a politically revolutionary factor can become a fetter on the Left and a muzzle on its anti-Imperialist expression. The failure of the Left to give solid organisational support to Jawaharlal made Jawaharlal's vacillation and partial weakening of his struggle against the Right inevitable. This weakening was not counteracted by the CSP. That could be done only if the CSP had strengthened itself organisationally. So the CSP afraid of offending Jawaharlal who was its main prop in the Congress, had to give way.

### **Jawaharlal & CSP**

The relation between Jawaharlal and the CSP is of profound importance for understanding the present rightist trend of the CSP. At first sight it might appear strange that the rightist trend of the CSP should coincide with the period of its greatest apparent strength in the Congress and the most extensive mass radicalisation in the country. Normally, in a situation when the masses are getting more and more radicalised, when larger and larger sections in the Congress are coming out in support of the CSP stand on most vital issues and when above all at the head of the Congress stands a radical like Jawaharlal the CSP itself should become more and more consistently anti-Imperialist. The development has been quite the other way. Why?

To answer this question, it would be necessary to go into the development of the CSP during the past two years. It is not necessary to do so here. The point has been exhaustively dealt

with in another article in this issue. Suffice it to say that hitherto because of the united opposition of the whole leadership the CSP had to concentrate the rank and file support in the Congress and support from anti-Imperialist forces outside the Congress. It was slowly but steadily building up its strength, broadening its basis. It had little hopes for support from above. Now it was suddenly *lifted* from above to a greater height than it could have *risen* on its own strength. *It began to look for support not below as hitherto but above.* Its attention was now concentrated not on a greater consolidation of United Front with revolutionary forces outside the Congress, not on the Congress rank and file but on the AICC, the Working Committee and above all on Jawaharlal. No wonder therefore that its enthusiasm for United Front waned, no wonder that the Party was progressively bureaucratised to prevent the entry of "undesirables" who might be "too radical", no wonder when Jawaharlal vacillated, the CSP also followed suit. The Socialist leaders themselves have no exaggerated notions about the strength of the Party. But they are proud to make it appear that they can mobilise more than a third of the Congress. A large part of this Left support is due to Jawaharlal. So if on any issue the CSP comes out in opposition to Jawaharlal it would not be able to mobilise as much support as it has been able to do till now. It is this mortal fear of exposing the limited nature of its ideological hold and organisational weakness that held the CSP back at the AICC meeting in Bombay and at the Faizpur Session. This was not the position before the advent of Jawaharlal. The CSP was weak and it did not attempt to conceal it. In all the AICC meetings held in 1935, it had sharply fought the Right-wing on the issue of war, on the issue of Native States, etc.

I have taken this point only to show how the Left forces due to their organisational weakness have not only failed to utilise the presence of Jawaharlal at the head of the Congress but his very presence has on more than one occasion emasculated the Left opposition.

This does not mean that Jawaharlal is to be held responsible for the failure of the Left. Not for a moment. On the contrary Jawaharlal has been a big force throughout the year in

radicalising the masses, in fighting with partial success against the capitulatory policy of the Right. The failure is of the parties of Left, their making agitational support to Jawaharlal a substitute for organisational consolidation.

We do not mean that this rightist trend of the CSP was conscious or even apparent on most occasions. It would not be correct to say either that the reason given above is the only reason of the present rightist tendency of the Party. It is known, that the CSP members of the Working Committee wanted to resign after the Delhi decision on ministry acceptance. To suggest therefore that the CSP, because it wanted to retain the seats in the Working Committee, did not fight against the Right-wing with sufficient rigour would be manifestly unjust, nor are we making that suggestion. The weakness of the CSP today is due to its *shifting the emphasis* (may be unconsciously) from independent mobilisation of the Congress rank and file of the platform of the Party, closer unity with working-class organisations, development of Left Unity (United Front organs of CSP, TUs, & Peasants' Unions) to support to Jawaharlal in the AICC and the Congress Sessions. This policy is suicidal for the CSP as an organised Party—as an independent political force.

Nevertheless throughout 1936 the Left forces gained strength, though this was far short of what could have been achieved. In the Congress Elections of 1936 held in November and December the CSP and its allies (including a few Communists) together gained more than 40 seats in the AICC in contrast with about a dozen seats in the previous year.

### **At Faizpur**

"At Faizpur the influence of the Left was apparent in most of the resolutions. Many resolutions written directly under the inspiration of Jawaharlal (Spain, Anti-War, Detenus, Civil Liberties) were of a Left nature as also the Presidential address as a whole. The attendance of peasants in enormous numbers, the Kisan Conference, the new Thesis adopted by CSP were all distinct steps forward" (Communist, No. 15). The agrarian programme inspite of its halting character was an advance and

some of its items (Moratorium on Debts, Cancellation of arrears of rent) potentially revolutionary.

"Yet inspite of all this Faizpur was a victory for the Right over the Left" (Communist, No. 15).

Why? The immediate issue before the country was the elections and how the election struggle should be conducted. This issue could not be separated from the opportunist policy, hitherto followed by the Congress Parliamentary Board in nominating a number of reactionaries as Congress candidates and its general policy. The Left with Jawaharlal at its head was too strong to be entirely ignored and the Right had to make concessions; it was prepared to make even important concessions which did not commit it immediately to a programme of mass action *provided* no frontal attack on its parliamentary policy was launched, *provided* the Left gave unequivocal support to its nomination and electoral policy. Secondly, it wanted to retain complete control over the organisational machinery of the Congress. The demand for democratisation of the Congress was successfully resisted, the Mass Contact resolution was shelved once again, the Disciplinary clause tightened rightist grip over the Congress machinery. Even after Sardar Patel had challenged Prof. Ranga to measure strength on the issue of the Parliamentary Board the Left dared not take up the challenge. The CSP leaders discussed it amongst themselves and ultimately decided not to attack the Board's policy.

On both points therefore on which the Right was determined to fight it won. But to score this victory it had to rely more than ever before on new methods. Gandhian ideology alone was not powerful enough to cope with the new situation. It had to move to the Left, to steal the thunder out of the Guns of the Left to gain its triumph. The Election Manifesto and the Agrarian Programme, if properly utilised, could, inspite of their shortcomings, have transformed the Elections into a mighty anti-Imperialist demonstration. But just as after Lucknow the Left

forces again failed to achieve this. The Election Manifesto and the Agrarian programme were, except in some provinces, hardly heard of during the entire campaign.

### **The Assembly Elections**

In spite of the failure of the organised Left, the Assembly Elections, even with the limited franchise (14%) clearly showed the extent and depth of mass radicalisation. Imperialism had left no stones unturned to defeat the Congress. By sanctioning a crore of rupees for village uplift, by its stupid and ridiculous 'drink more milk' and 'stud-bull' campaign it had attempted to broaden its social basis. By consolidation of reactionaries of all shades—Communalists, landlords, titled heads—in National Agriculturist, Unionist and People's Parties, it had hoped to defeat the forces of progress. By direct support to Zamindar terror to intimidate peasants, it had tried to demoralise and cow down the masses. But in spite of the failure of the Congress to win over Muslim masses because of its lack of live contact with them, the victory of the Congress on the whole was phenomenal and astounding, far greater than what even Congressmen themselves had hoped. In six provinces with a total population of 160 millions, the reactionary parties created by Imperialism and its lackeys were swept away; even in the remaining five provinces the Congress did far better than was expected.

It was a glorious victory for the Indian people. It was a concrete manifestation of the revolutionary hatred of the masses for Imperialism and its charter of slavery and the sham constitution. It was a demonstration of the love of the masses for the Congress, their faith in it. But, the election result is by no means an endorsement by the people of the policy of the dominant Congress Right-wing. On the contrary it is a severe indictment of the passive, capitulatory policy. The Right-wing is afraid of struggle, of mass action, but the nation by rallying round the Congress banner expressed its will for action. The Right-wing deprecates anti-Zamindar struggle, but militant anti-Zamindar peasant movement in Behar, U.P. and Orissa ensured Congress triumph.

The Elections show the determination of the masses to smash the Constitution, their eagerness for action and above all they presage the coming agrarian storm.

The last point is of utmost importance for getting a proper perspective. The striking success of the Congress in the Lower House in U.P., Behar and Orissa and the equally striking failure in the Upper House were no mere accidents. The gulf between the Congress and big Zamindars has definitely widened. As recently as the beginning of 1936 the Congress leaders in U.P. and Behar were making desperate efforts to make electoral agreement with the big landlords. But the peasant movement gained strength and the local Congress organisations—Taluka, village and even District Congress bodies became more and more identified with the developing peasant movement. The peasant masses by rallying round the Congress expressed their anti-Zamindar and anti-Imperialist hatred. The Zamindars by mobilising against the Congress by trying to crush the Congress expressed their support to Imperialism.

*The agrarian revolution, the central feature of colonial revolution is fast maturing. The feudal vested interests and the peasants are mobilising in hostile camps.*

### **The Working-Class in Action**

The B.N. Rly. Strike of over 60 thousand workers was the most important event in the working-class movement since the Textile General Strike of 1934. Because of the reformist character of the leadership which adopted dilatory tactics and sanctioned the strike only when it had no other alternative and which opposed militant forms of struggle, the fight did not attain the level of the G.I.P. strike of 1930. Because of the splitting tactics of the Railwaymen's Federation which had kept the ranks of the workers disunited and had rejected offers of the TUC for joint preparation for Railway General Strike, the strike did not spread to the other Railways and the heroic B.N. Rly. workers had to acknowledge defeat after six weeks' struggle.

Hardly was the fight over when an even mightier struggle of the Bengal Jute Workers commenced. Here again the leadership



failed—at least during the initial period. Precious days, when masses of people were coming out on struggle, were wasted over the debate whether the slogan of General Strike should be given or not. Thanks to the intervention of the AITUC the debate was brought to an end and a United Central Strike Committee was formed. Within a fortnight the number of strikers swelled from 80,000 to 200,000. The repressive machinery of the Government was set in full motion. Twelve leaders of the strike were served with orders not to enter the Jute area, twice fire was opened, processions were banned, peaceful strikers were assaulted with lathis by the police and mercenaries of Jute lords. Yet the fight continued unabated. It gained greater and greater strength every day.

In the Barrackpore and Hugli areas where nearly a lac went on strike, the brave struggle of the Jute workers affected other sections of workers also and the strike spread to Cotton Mills, Paper Mills, water and gas works. There were sharp clashes in which whole villages (many workers in these areas live in villages) rallied together and fought with stones and sticks against armed policemen. Mass clashes at mill gates defeated efforts at blacklegging and raised the morale of strikers. As no meetings in these areas could be held (due to ban) and strike leaders were not allowed to enter there, meetings were organised across the river. Nearly 20,000 strikers crossed once to Chandannagore and once to Nadia to participate in demonstrations. In Budge-Budge and Howrah severe clashes took place. The efforts of the blacklegging minister Suhrawardy to stage a communal riot and split the ranks of workers miserably failed. At length an agreement was brought about and the strike came to an end; but the struggle to enforce the agreement is proceeding day-to-day in the mills and the departments.

*The working-class has already commenced its epic struggles, which in the past have been forerunners of the national movement.*

The period of comparative stagnation which followed the defeat of the National Movement in 1933 and the working-class movement in 1934 is long past. Widespread mass radicalisation

which has affected all sections of the Indian people is expressing itself today by students joining national demonstrations, by peasants mobilising in class organs and by the working-class—the vanguard of the national forces—coming out on political and economic mass action (Calcutta Jute Strike, the political strike of Bombay on 1st April).

### **Wardha Meeting and the Convention**

The Wardha meeting of the Congress Working Committee (last week of February, 1937) constitutes a landmark in the history of the National Congress. In spite of the bureaucratic character of the Congress machinery, due to which the rank and file can exert little influence on the leadership, the extensive radicalisation of the masses was partly reflected in the decisions of the Congress High Command. Hitherto the Left had failed in its efforts to make the Congress accept a platform of popular demands of a partial and democratic character for struggle inside and outside the Legislatures. At Wardha, due mainly to the efforts of Jawaharlal, the Working Committee adopted a platform of mass demands, which though not very specific, especially as regards working-class and peasant demands, constitutes a distinct advance over anything made till now.

The partial acceptance by the Working Committee of the platform of United National Front, while it opens up new possibilities for the development of the anti-Imperialist movement, does not mean for a moment that the Right-wing has become convert to the policy of mass action. The Right-wing had set its heart on Ministry acceptance but it had to placate the Left. The Left forces in the country and in the Congress though not strong enough to dislodge the dominant leadership, were however, too strong to be *ignored*. The Wardha platform, while pregnant with revolutionary possibilities, was for Mahatma and his group a mere sop to the Left.

The desperate efforts of Jawaharlal to defeat ministry-acceptance while it rallied more than one third (78 out of 215) of the AICC at Delhi, could not alter the final result. By a majority the AICC set its seal on the shameful compromise formula of Mahatma. The assurance clause was a mere eye-wash.

At Delhi, Mahatma for all practical purposes, personally re-assumed the leadership of the Right. This was because of the realisation by the Right of the growing strength of Jawaharlal. Having handed over the leadership of the Congress in the 'safe' hands of Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, the Mahatma in October 1934 had staged the stunt of a spectacular exit. This was a mere repetition of his withdrawal from the Congress in 1923. But then, the forces of the Left were far weaker. Then, there was no party of the Left inside the Congress. Then, at the head of the Left there was not a leader of Jawaharlal's calibre (Jawaharlal himself, in spite of his vague Leftism, was far less consistent than today in his struggle with the Right). Then, the working-class movement—the galvaniser of the broad masses—was at a low level. For more than six years Mahatma lived in tranquility. Only when the masses actually started moving, did he come back, to impose his reactionary tactic of Satyagraha on the spontaneously developing mass movement. This time he had to come back far more quickly.

The assurance clause, though a clever manœuvre, deceived nobody. The long-cherished dream of Satyamurti and Rajendra Prasad seemed to be realised.

### **Imperialism Refuses**

But the Congress Right had calculated without Imperialism. To some Comrades it seems inexplicable as to why the Government refused to give the desired 'assurance'. Imperialism demands complete surrender. *Unless actually threatened with revolutionary mass action*, it dares not to take any step that would be even indirectly interpreted as its bowing down to the Congress, that would enhance Congress prestige even temporarily. In the present situation of international tension, growing strength of militant working-class movement at home, and rising tide of national indignation in its colonies—Iraq, India—even a show of weakness on its part might be fatal. To give a formal assurance, even when there is no fear of immediate mass action, and thereby facilitate the constitutionalism of the Right and disintegrate the National Front is a subtle tactic that can be used by a social order

in its heyday. A decaying order, relying mainly not on mass support but on terror does not dare to wield the sharp sword, it can only rely on the clumsy bludgeon. Either the ridiculous drink-more-milk and stud-bull campaign or the rule of naked terror or a crude combination of both—this is the epitome of Imperialist policy. Only when a revolutionary mass movement has actually started or is imminent, does Imperialism adopt conciliatory tactics.

This unexpected development shocked and amazed the Right. That at the very moment nearly two lakhs of workers in Calcutta were waging a heroic struggle, that the remarkable militant demonstrations all over the country on 1st April had conclusively shown that the people are ready for action were not factors that influenced Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari in the least when chalking out the future programme. 'Prepare for the next elections' was the only slogan they could think of.

Then followed the nauseating spectacle of Mahatma pleading for Arbitration, constitutional Pundits interpreting the Act and Zetland's insolent challenge. The erstwhile leaders who had declared their determination to wreck the Constitution, were overjoyed because Professor Keith, the Imperialist Constitutional Authority, had declared that the Congress demand was "perfectly constitutional". The Working Committee met again at Allahabad (last week of April 1937). The U.P. Congress Committee, under Jawaharlal's leadership, had declared for parallel Legislature. But for the Working Committee this was too revolutionary and likely to be taken by Imperialism as a challenge to its sacred right to rule. Therefore it could only protest against the 'discourteous pronouncements' of Zetland and Butler and inform British Imperialism that "it was informed by eminent jurists that the assurance could be given within the Constitution". It failed to give any lead whatsoever, it asked the anti-Imperialist fighters to be content with Khaddar, village uplift and Hindu-Muslim Unity. It put a ban on black-flag demonstrations against the puppet ministries. Once again Mahatma triumphed.

Zetland once again made it clear that the Governors cannot divest themselves of the obligation imposed by the Act.

Commenting on this clear and unequivocal statement Mahatma said: "If the Congress takes office, it will make serious efforts to make a substantial advance *by that method* towards its unequivocal goal of complete independence insofar as it is constitutionally possible to make that advance" (Italics ours).

From March to June the Delhi stand has been successively watered down. In the words of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya: "First all special powers were to go, then all discretionary powers, assurances in this behalf, then dismissal not resignation now demand for compulsory resignation". In his latest interview to the representative of the 'Times of India' Mahatma says: "I am very anxious that Congressmen should take office—but only if Government show their willingness to conciliate the Congress". As we go to press, the Right-wing circles in the Congress are eagerly waiting for the "next conciliatory move" from Delhi and from London.

Gone were talks of wrecking the Constitution, of forcing deadlocks, of creating mass sanction. Instead of all these, the Indian people was to make advance towards independence constitutionally (*by that method*) and *therefore* the Congress had decided to accept office.

### **The Position in the Anti-Imperialist Camp**

This is the situation. On one hand fast-developing tempo of mass struggle, on the other hand the sabotaging tactics of the reformists—this is the position in the anti-Imperialist camp. The longer this situation is allowed to continue, the more fatal it will be for the success of the impending national movement.

A short while ago Jawaharlal declared, commenting on the refusal of Governors to give assurance, that "he was quite satisfied with the development". The CSP also hailed the deadlock. They described the Allahabad Working Committee decisions as one of "watch and wait", a "setback which they hoped to be temporary". Some of the CSP leaders expressed the view. "The Right-wing is politically bankrupt. The refusal of the Government to give assurance has shattered its hopes and its confusion it has fallen back on the old programme of Charkha

and Khaddar". In its Manifesto to a London Conference held on May 22nd the CSP declares: "Two years of persistent agitation has resulted in the Congress accepting the destruction of the Constitution as its objective and the refusal of the Government to give the requisite assurance has resulted in the vindication of the Party's stand and the immediate creation of *that constitutional deadlock for which the Party had been striving.*" (Our italics).

Such a reading is not only fundamentally incorrect—it is suicidal. What has taken place is *not* a revolutionary deadlock, (was the CSP striving for a *constitutional* deadlock?) but stagnation.

Let us not deceive ourselves with talks of "mass radicalisation". There *has been* an extensive mass radicalisation but this *by itself* will not lead to an organised *mass movement*, will not force the hands of the Right-wing that is holding back the masses (it expressed its disapproval of even militant demonstrations against the ministerial traitors). The Right-wing led by Mahatma, is not politically bankrupt in the sense in which the CSP understands it. No one who has read the statements of Mahatma, Rajagopalachari and other Right leaders can fail to see that the Congress High Command has not given up hopes of a compromise, or if no compromise is arrived at because of Government stubbornness, of ministry acceptance by virtually going back even on the Delhi decision. Already the emphasis has been shifted from the demand for definite assurance of non-interference to the demand *that the Governors in case of difference with the ministers should dismiss them and not expect them to resign.* But for such a step (i.e., in practice going back on the AICC decision) a suitable atmosphere must be created and the failure of Mahatma to give a lead is only an apparent failure—it is an integral part of the programme *for creating such an atmosphere.*

There is no doubt that if the present stagnation continues, opinion in the Congress will veer more and more towards acceptance of office. Sections of those who in the past opposed office acceptance—condition or no condition—would support unconditional acceptance as a way-out of the 'impasse'. Inaction would bear down the opposition of the Left.

*Refusal to accept office without assurance and a simultaneous refusal to sanction any mass action (even demonstration against ministries or a militant boycott of coronation) would pave the way to unconditional office acceptance.*

The more we delay in mobilising against this move the worse will become the situation, the plea of Satyamurti and Rajagopalachari that deadlocks can be brought about more effectively by acceptance of office will gain greater and greater support. A situation would be created when ministry would appear to be "a better way of fighting the Government" and the organised Left would find itself isolated.

It is this move which we must defeat.

### **Imperialism and its Allies**

Imperialism and its lackeys in the meantime have not been idle. The Government knows only too well that summoning the Legislatures means signing the death warrant of its henchmen's ministries. Therefore on the one hand it postpones the meeting of the Legislatures, on the other it attempts to boost up its lackeys. All provincial Governors are praising the traitors who had the 'courage' to 'shoulder the responsibility' of defying the verdict of the nation and carrying on the 'King's Government'. The 'interim ministries' have, great pomposity proclaimed their 'programmes'. The Cooper Ministry of Bombay has done up an ambitious programme which includes (1) Free and compulsory primary education; (2) Village medical relief, water supply and improvement of agriculture and industries; (3) Reduction and remission in land revenues; (4) Prohibition. It has undertaken Relief work in Bijapore. Mr. Jamna Das has promised to the agriculturists that his or rather master's Government would always keep the interest of the poor in the forefront. The Chhatari Ministry of U.P. is not lagging behind. The old game of Imperialism continues—in spite of repeated failures it strives to broaden its basis by petty ameliorative measures or rather by holding out hopes of such measures. It hopes that its agents *would do better in the next elections* and therefore these efforts to cover its naked brutality with a garb of benevolence.

Meanwhile, terror especially against the extreme Left has been intensified. The 'autonomous' Government of Fazlul Haq showed clearly that it had nothing to learn from the previous 'diarchical' Government as far as justifying repressive measures against the working-class is concerned. The Cooper Ministry unceremoniously rejected the application of Communist Internees. The Madras Government banned the Summer School of politics, armed police were sent to disperse the students, over sixty were arrested.

'Prepare for the next Elections', is the slogan given by the Congress. 'Not one localist must be returned'. Yes, but how? Khaddar and Charkha will not achieve the end. Right from now preparation for the next Elections must be indissolubly linked up with mass struggle. The Left must not fail this time.

## OUR TASKS

### Political

At Wardha in the last week of February 1937, the Working Committee of the Congress adapted the following programme:

"The objective of the Congress is Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence and to that end all its activities are directed. The Congress stands for a genuine democratic State where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the Government is under their effective control. Such a State can only be created by the Indian people themselves and the Congress has therefore insisted on a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise to determine the Constitution of the country. The Constituent Assembly can only come into existence when the people have developed sufficient power and sanctions to shape their destiny without external interference.

"The immediate objective of the Congress in the Legislatures is to fight the New Constitution, to resist the introduction and working of the Federal part of the Act and to lay stress on the nation's demand for a Constituent Assembly. Congress members in the Legislatures have been directed by the Faizpur Congress to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new Assemblies this demand and to support it by mass agitation outside.



"Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the Election Manifesto and the Congress Agrarian resolution. In particular they should work for:

1. Substantial reduction in rent and revenue.
2. Assessment of agricultural income on a progressive scale on agricultural income, subject to a prescribed minimum.
3. Fixity of Tenure.
4. Relief from burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue.
5. Repeal of all oppressive laws.
6. Release of political prisoners, interneers and detenues.
7. Restoration of land and property, confiscated and sold by Government during C.D. Movement.
8. Eight-hour day for industrial workers, without reduction of pay, Living Wages.
9. Prohibition of intoxicating liquors and drugs.
10. Unemployment Relief.
11. Reduction of high salaries and cost of administration of Government.

"Congress members in the Provincial Legislatures should further give expression to certain important demands of all-India application which may not be given effect to in Provincial Assemblies, such as:

1. Substantial reduction of military expenditure as well as of higher civil service.
2. Complete national control over trade and tariff and currency.
3. Freedom of Speech, Press and Association.
4. Repeal of all-India repressive legislations.
5. Opposition to war preparation, credit and loans.

"Congress members in the Assembly must always endeavour to mobilise public opinion in their Constituencies for the particular demand they are putting forth in the Legislatures. Work in the Legislatures should thus be co-ordinated with activity outside and mass movement built up in support of their demands and of Congress policy in general."

### **How to Build the United National Front**

Properly utilised by an organised Left, this programme can immediately become a most powerful weapon for forging the United National Front. But it may be taken for granted that the Right will not do it. The Allahabad anti-climax definitely shows that we look in vain for even passing reference to this platform in hundreds of statements and speeches made by Mahatma, Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari since March, 1937. Therefore this task develops upon the determined and conscious anti-Imperialists in the National camp.

Representative conferences of the Left organisations in every province—Trade Unions, Peasants' Unions, CSPs, Congress organisations if possible and individual Congressmen should be immediately convened. The Wardha programme further concretised (50% reduction in rent, minimum wages of Rs. 30/- per month etc.) with a few more basic demands (repeal of Arms Act, equal rights for State citizens, Right of workers to strike and picket, Lifting of bans from national and class organisations—the Hindustani Seva Dal, the T.U.s. etc. should be made the basis of platform of National Unity. The Conferences must:

1. Demand the immediate convening of Legislatures.
2. Denounce the ministries of betrayal.
3. In view of the final refusal of Imperialism to accede to the AICC demand for Assurance, all talks of compromise must be stopped and the Congress should unequivocally declare against ministry.
4. Undertake extensive popularisation of the platform of United National Front and mass mobilisation on its basis in sharp opposition to the so-called programme of Imperialist interim ministries.
5. Sharply criticise (without imputing motives) the present policy of the Congress leadership as one paving the way to capitulation.
6. Demand Collective Affiliation and the democratisation of the Congress.
7. Draw up a concrete plan for making local Congress units live organisations, and for making United Front action between them and Workers' and Peasants' organisations real.

The last point must be very concretely discussed. United Front between Congress Organisations and T.U.s. today is mostly nominal. It has not yet proceeded beyond the joint demonstration phase. Every joint demonstration is 'joint' in name only. The Trade Union organises a political meeting, the local Congress 'lends its auspices' and one or two Congress leaders come to the meeting held under tri-colour and the Red Flag and speak nothing beyond that. As far as the Congress masses are concerned they seldom evince any interest in the matter.

When the Congress itself organises a meeting, unless some big leader comes there the meeting is poorly attended. In a district where the Congress has got thousands of members, a group of only ten or twelve leaders function as the Congress organisation—rest being passive members. No wonder, in the absence of healthy day-to-day work, cliques are formed and rival factions only attempt to 'capture' the local Congress machinery. In the past the Congress has always relied more on spontaneous mass enthusiasm than on systematic efforts to stimulate this enthusiasm and harness it. The anti-Imperialist rank and file in absence of any programme merely vegetate.

Transformation of the Congress units from the present loose non-functioning bodies into live organs of anti-Imperialist struggle and their dynamic United Front with class organisations are among the basic tasks of the present stage of our National struggle. These two tasks are by no means separate and exclusive of each other. Only when the Congress organisations become living dynamic units, can their United Front with class organisations draw millions in the struggle. And again only through United Front struggle can this transformation in the Congress organisations be brought about. Unless the Constitution of the Congress is changed, organisational United Front in the form of Collective Affiliation can not be brought about. But we cannot wait till the culmination of that process. We must here and now devise ways and means to make joint action an increasing United Front with the Congress a reality. We suggest the following steps to be taken immediately in furtherance of the object.

1. The Local Congress Organisation should form Labour Boards in co-operation with local TUC unit. Half the members in the Board should be elected by the Congress and half by the TUC. The Board shall undertake political, economic, social and cultural work—joint meetings and processions, active participation by Congress in working-class struggle, organisation of relief to strikers, joint hand-bills, clubs, gymnasiums, reading rooms, night-schools, publications, etc. On matters on which there arises differences between the TUC and the Congress units will not co-operate on that specific issue and for that specific occasion only. One of the major tasks of the Board will be to explain to the Congress masses the democratic significance of partial economic struggles and ensure their active participation in such meetings, processions and struggles.

Broad organisations of workers and middle-class youths on a national platform under joint flags and a common uniform into Volunteer Corps, also may be undertaken by the Labour Board, if possible.

2. On the same line, Tenants' Boards may be formed wherever there are Tenants' Associations and where there are none, the local Congress Unit should take the initiative in forming them through Tenants' Boards. In Bombay, even in Fort area abounding with palatial buildings in localities like Maruti Lane, Police Court Lane, the overwhelming majority (95% according to the Secretary of the Tenant Committee) live in one room tenements (6 to 8 persons crowded in one room). Agitation for the reduction of house rent, (Rent in working-class areas of Bombay has risen by 60% since 1914), for better supply of water, etc., will surely mobilise even those sections of the lower middle-class and workers who are today politically backward.

Similar Committees for work among Muslims, among sweepers, and among women should be formed by the Congress, in unity with other organisations wherever possible—on its own wherever necessary.

3. Every month the D.C. of the Congress must bring out a bulletin containing a summary of the work on the various fronts—Labour, Peasant, Tenants, Women, Muslims, etc.

4. Every month primary Conferences of Congress Members should be convened by each unit.

If this plan is concretely worked out the Congress Units instead of remaining a loose group of individuals bound together by vague national sentiments will become de facto United Front Organisations, compact in character, active on all Fronts. The major tasks of Comrades and the CSP in the Congress today is to fight for the re-organisation of the Congress on this functional basis. Agitation for Collective Affiliation, though essential not enough. Only when Collective Affiliation has already become a living reality, in essence, though not in form, will our demand be conceded.

### **Left Unity**

But in order to carry out these tasks, immediate unity between the parties and organisations of the Left is essential. Unity between the Congress Left and the working-class can alone constitute a stable basis on which the broad United National Front can be built up. (This, of course, does not mean that one process-excluded the other.) Concretely speaking, the Unity of the CSP with the working-class peasant organisations must constitute the main core of the United National Front.

The relation between the working-class and the CSP has progressively deteriorated during the last year. In provinces where the CSPs are definitely Left, this development has not taken place. In places where the reformist Trade Union leaders themselves constitute the leadership of the CSP (e.g. Bengal) the contradiction has remained latent. The Comrades therefore may say, 'This appraisal is incorrect. It is only in Bombay, that such an unfortunate development has taken place and that is due to the policy pursued by Bombay Communists who steeped in sectarianism could not develop a proper United Front outlook'.

Such a reading is incorrect. We cannot judge the success or failure of United Front between the CSP and the working-class by a mechanical adding up of provinces where the leaders and CSP leaders are on friendly terms and comparing this result with those in which they are not. We have to come to a judgement on

the basis of entirely different facts. What has been the policy of the *All-India CSP Executive* towards the United Front? Has United Front developed in places where the CSP is *really a party of the Congress* (as distinct from places where the CSP is led by reformist TU leaders or Marxists) the working-class has reached a high level of political consciousness? What were the *basic issues* on which the United Front broke up? It is a reply to these fundamental questions that can supply us with the key for future advance.

It is in Bombay that the working-class and National Movements have reached their greatest heights. Bombay is the ideological and political capital of the Congress, the CSP and the TUC. The CSP in Bombay was born not out of the working-class but out of the Congress movement. The working-class here has developed under Marxist leadership into an independent political force. Therefore the developments in Bombay are of utmost importance for not only local but an all-India evolution.

The basic issue on which the CSP and the TUC in Bombay came into sharp clash was the issue of political independence of the working-class movement. It is unnecessary to go into details here. The opposition of the CSP to the TUC setting up its own candidate (in the TUC Session in May 1936) was an opposition of a basic political character—opposition to independent class action by the proletariat on the political Front. The CSP policy was objectively that of political subordination of the working-class to the existing Right-wing leadership of the Congress and this attitude of the CSP towards the working-class is no more Bombay phenomenon. It is the general attitude of the Party. *Herein lies the root cause of the disruption.*

But this policy by itself could not lead to the present state of disunity. *The way in which this policy was carried out*—Socialist ‘Silence’ over the mobilisation of strike-breakers by the BPCC (Bombay Provincial Congress Committee) in its election struggle against the TUC. Socialist leaders speaking from the same platform with working-class enemies, general support of the CSP to the Campaign of slander against the TUC—contributed most in creating the present regrettable state of affairs. And today

the CSP demands unconditional apology from the TUC as a price for the re-establishment of United Front relations.

This deadlock must be brought to an end by any and every means consistent with the honour of both parties. And we must evolve concrete ways and means for building up a real United Front between the working-class and Congress Left. This task can be most speedily achieved if the CSP itself becomes better organised, secures a broader basis and above all makes the progressive transformation of the Congress on the lines suggested above, *its most important immediate task*. The CSP must become, above all, the galvaniser of the Congress, its motive force, the initiator and leader of the struggle for the dynamic re-organisation of the Congress on a militant basis, and its anti-Imperialist Unity with the working-class. In every province today the CSP is an important force even in the highest Congress organs. Its task is to properly utilise its influence. The CSP must supply active centres for Trade Union and Peasant Union work.

Thus alone shall Left Unity be built up.

### **Build Working-Class Unity and the Communist Party**

It is on the working-class front that organisationally the least progress has been made during the last year, although more than any other class the Proletariat has initiated and fought major mass actions (B.N. Rly. Strike, Jute Strike, Bombay political strike on 1st April). It must be realised by all Comrades that a strong Trade Union basis is absolutely essential if the Party is to become an effective political force. The 'theory' that strong Unions cannot be built up in India must be definitely given up as a theory of inaction and defeatism. It is true that today we cannot organise mass unions in an absolute sense, (70 to 80% workers in a big industry but organisation of 15 to 20% of workers in the major industries—Railways, Textiles, Jute, Docks, is certainly immediately possible and must be achieved).

Unions can never become effective militant organisations without having factory and workshop basis. Most of our Unions today suffer from this serious drawback. They are organised on an individual basis just like local Congress units. No wonder

therefore, we seldom know what is actually going on in factories and struggles take us by surprise. Functioning Factory and Shop Committees alone can connect the Union closely with the working masses. Factory and workshop Conferences of delegates from the departments must be organised. Specific demands formulated and agitation on their basis carried on (through hand-bills, wall-newspapers, meetings, etc.).

The struggle for TU Unity has got to be intensified a hundred-fold. We shall never achieve TU Unity by the methods generally being pursued today. The Unity Board meets on an average once a year, and the top leaders of the TUC and NFTU discuss and disperse without having arrived at any agreement. Giri's proposal was no Unity proposal at all. Yet even that is not agreed to by the Federation leaders. We must demand the formation of local and Provincial Joint Boards for organising joint struggle, joint relief, joint publications, Joint Labour Research Bureaus, etc.

Rank and File Conferences should be organised to explain concretely the significance of the rising wave of working-class movement and the absolute necessity for Unity on the basis of the Unity Platform of the TUC which must be extensively popularised. We shall explain how lack of Unity prevented United Action on the Railway retrenchment issue and the heroic B.N. Rly. Strike was defeated.

One of the chief weaknesses of the movement is the lack of cadres. It is not the working-class movement alone that suffers from this weakness. The Congress, the CSP, all complain that they have not enough men. Tens of thousands of unknown volunteers in the National Movement of 1930 and 1932 displayed initiative, dash and capacity for leadership. Every working-class struggle—a big strike, a militant demonstration—brings in the forefront rank and file workers—courageous and self-sacrificing who could be developed into genuine working-class leaders. Absolutely nothing is done to spot them, pick them up and train them politically and organisationally. The result is their enthusiasm wanes and they drop out or if they remain in the TU movement, they develop a strong reformist economist outlook.



Unless systematic training of rank and file workers, rank and file Congressmen is undertaken, we shall never be able to spread our movement and consolidate, we shall never be able to build up the Revolutionary Mass Party of the working-class—The Communist Party. And by 'training' we mean not only teaching them the use of a few phrases, not only teaching them the history of working-class movement, but developing in them a revolutionary outlook on all fronts—Trade Union, National, Peasant, Literary and Cultural. Thus alone will they become real working-class and national leaders. Thus alone will the Parties of the Left—the C.P. and CSP—strengthen themselves organisationally.

These are the immediate tasks before us today. Unless we immediately set ourselves to carry them out, unless we harness the spontaneously developing mass energy, organise it and develop revolutionary action, there is the serious danger of the vanguards being crushed in isolation. Imperialism has already commenced a general attack against the Left, the Right-wing of the Congress is following a policy of criminal dilatoriness. It is for us, as the vanguard of the Left to call a stop to the policy of drift, to give a lead for determined action.

**WE MUST NOT FAIL AGAIN!**

## Polit Bureau's Resolution on the Congress Ministries

### I

#### Resolution on the Congress Ministries

1. The decision of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress (INC) to accept offices is stated to have ended the "Constitutional Deadlock". But it has undoubtedly not ended the state of deadlock which has come over our struggle of National Freedom since the first of April. The three months which succeeded the inauguration of the Constitution stand in sharp contrast to the previous months of the rising tempo of the national movement. The victorious path of the election campaign was marked by innumerable success of mass enthusiasm and mass mobilisation. In spite of repression, open and veiled, in spite of provocation and incitement of communal hatred, the people registered an overwhelming support to the INC. They recognised in the INC the champion of their cause, the leader of their struggles against foreign Imperialism and against their native exploiters. Every vote cast in favour of the INC was a vote for a struggle against Imperialism—and against compromise, against working the Constitution for petty gains. This was proved by the mass response to the call for an anti-Constitution Hartal and Strike on the 1st of April. But during the months which followed the initiative which the masses had developed was not further *developed*. The momentum, which the struggle of the toiling masses had gathered expressed itself in the mighty general strike of the Jute workers and in the growth in the organisation and the struggle of the peasants in Behar, U.P., Bengal and

Orissa. Imperialist repression intensified under the regime of ministers interim and otherwise. But the unified National lead which could quicken the pace of the struggle which could convert it into an all-India struggle against the New Ministers and the Slave Constitution was lacking.

2. The reasons for the deadlock in the forward motion of our National struggle are two-fold. On the one hand the rightwing leaders of the INC, wanted to harness the enthusiasm of the masses to win mass support for their reformist policy of diverting the struggle to the constitutional plane. A theory was developed that 'parliamentary mentality had come to stay', and that the masses were unwilling to fight. It was argued that a period of respite was necessary. In the election propaganda itself, the attention was focused on the Councils rather than on struggle—on the developing of mass sanctions to end the Constitution. In the months which followed the inauguration of the Constitution the attention was diverted to constitutional issues. The masses were being prepared for the acceptance of ministries by Congressmen. On the other hand the entire leftwing was not strong enough to turn the initiative of the masses to account on its own. It failed to utilise the advances registered in the election manifesto, to turn the election propaganda into a mighty anti-Imperialist demonstration. While it succeeded in mobilising considerable mass support for the policy of not accepting office, it failed to link its anti-Ministry agitation with a concrete alternative plan of developing mass struggle against the Constitution.

3. The decision at the Delhi meeting of the AICC to demand assurance from the Government regarding the special powers of the Governors, as a condition precedent to the formation of Congress Ministries was determined by the interplay of these two forces. The rightwing leaders were unable to push through the policy of unconditional acceptance because of the considerable weight of opinion in favour of non-acceptance. On the other hand the rightwing leaders did not want to commit themselves to the rejection of ministries irrevocably. If the assurance that the Governor's powers would not be used against the Congress ministers, could be obtained the rightwing leaders hoped to make

out the case for the acceptance of ministries more plausible. With the hindrance of the Governors' powers removed, it could make out a case for enforcing the Wardha Programme, for galvanising the country by enforcing progressive legislation and thus setting the stage for wrecking the Constitution, through forming ministries. The demand for assurance was thus calculated to dull the edge of the resistance of the left to the acceptance of offices.

4. It was expected that assurance would be granted, but at the last moment Imperialism refused. Realising the weakness of the rightwing leadership, its inability to initiate or sharpen mass struggle—and the fact that it was strongly influenced by sections of the bourgeoisie who wanted office acceptance in order to gain some partial demands, Imperialism refused to grant the assurance. Through the successive statements of Lord Zetland, Stanly and the Viceroy, it was made clear that the acceptance of ministries involved the working the Constitution in joint partnership with the Governors, and that provided that such a view was taken by the Congress ministers there would hardly be any interference through the use of Governors' special powers. As for the assurance it could not be granted as it would be tantamount to a change in the Constitution. Imperialism wanted the INC to accept offices on its terms.

5. The refusal of the assurance demanded was not met by the INC leadership as a challenge. It did not embark on the path of nation-wide mass agitation and demonstrations against the interim ministers and the Constitution. It ought to have explained to the masses that the special powers of the Governors were a bar to the enforcing of the resolutions of the INC and to combatting the Constitution from within. It ought to have called upon the interim ministers to fulfil the programme of demands of the people on the basis of which the majority party in the Assembly was elected. "Fulfil the demands of Wardha Programme of the INC or Resign"—This ought to have been the slogan of the mass agitation against the puppet ministries. This would have made clear to the masses the unrepresentative character of the ministers and the worthlessness of the Constitution. Conferences of the Congress Assembly members, demanding the calling of the

Assemblies coupled with mass demonstrations throughout the country against the interim ministers, against their failure to enforce the urgent popular demands such as the "release of Political Prisoners" etc., would have helped to progressively intensify the mass struggle against the Constitution and give it an organised form. Instead of thus moving forward to the building up of a mass front of struggle on a nation-wide scale—instead of linking up the partial struggles of workers and peasants, against Imperialist repression, for organisation and for democratic rights with the struggle against the new ministers as the instruments of the Slave Constitution, the rightwing leaders began to move backwards. The decision embodying the Delhi Resolution of the AICC was interpreted and re-interpreted by Mahatma Gandhi—and the demand for the suspension of the Governors' powers was successively watered down. The attention of the people was diverted to the constitutional quibble over the assurance clause, while the Working Committee put an effective stop to any aggressive mass demonstrations against the interim ministers by the Allahabad decision. The precious time which followed the inauguration of the Constitution was used to create a deadlock in the struggle against the Constitution and then to use this as an argument to prove the sterility of the course of Not Accepting Offices.

6. None of the left parties, including the Communists were able on their own initiative to develop a united front mass struggle against the interim ministers, on concrete issues of the workers' and peasants' struggle, of the fight against repression and for the release of political prisoners. The C.P. (Communist Party) though it saw that the struggle against the acceptance of offices could only gather force on the basis of a concrete struggle against the Constitution—were not strong enough to give a lead on an all-India scale. The CSP on the other hand took the sterile view that the refusal of Imperialism to give assurance was a substitute for their own struggle against the acceptance of ministries. To them wrecking of the Constitution was the same as the suspension of the same by the Governors. The result was that their anti-ministry activity slowly faded out since April and the

culmination point was reached when one of their prominent leaders declared himself for office acceptance and their representatives in the Working Committee did not oppose the resolution for office acceptance at Wardha. M. N. Roy from the very start acted as the transmitter of the influence of the rightwing among the ranks of the left. He worked out a whole system of left phraseology to cover up the conciliatory nature of the rightist line, while supporting it on every point in practice. The essence of the position of the rightwing leaders was this: The logical implication of the refusal to accept the ministries was immediately to launch a nationwide civil disobedience movement. This was not possible now. Hence it was necessary to accept the ministries, combat the Constitution from within and concentrate on "the constructive programme". By posing, nation-wide C.D. Movement or a purely parliamentary struggle as the only possible alternatives it side-tracked the main task of progressively building up the mass organisation and struggle against the Constitution. M. N. Roy achieved the same object by counter-posing parallel Government to the acceptance of office to "galvanise the situation".

7. The reason for the ineffectiveness of the left is to be sought in the way in which the whole issue of ministries was posed and in the manner the anti-ministry agitation and struggle was carried out. The whole question hinged on how the struggle against the Constitution was to be carried out. The controversy at bottom was between the forces of reformism and of revolution. Was the mass struggle against the Constitution to be strengthened and intensified through the revolutionary use of the legislatures, through the building up of workers' and peasants' organisations, by carrying on an unrelenting struggle against the ministers or was the national movement to be diverted from the path of mass struggle to that of parliamentary reformism? That was the crucial question behind the whole controversy. It was an issue of struggle between the two tendencies. The issue of non-acceptance was generally often posed in a sterile, negative way. It was not linked up with an alternative programme for mobilisation of the masses for struggle against the Constitution and for the enforcement of

the demands as formulated in the election manifesto and the Wardha Programme of February 27th. If the entire left forces had united on the issue of developing mass struggle against the constitution, if they could have succeeded in using every parital struggle of workers and peasants as a lever for launching a mass offensive against the interim ministers, the situation could have been transformed. There was no unity in the left ranks. We failed to develop initiative in conducting a country-wide agitation against the ministers interim and otherwise—on the slogan "Fulfil the demands of the people or get out". If we could have linked up this agitation with the various strike struggles, with the numerous struggles of the peasantry, with the fight against repression and the non-release of political prisoners, we could have concretely brought home to the people the conclusion that nothing could be got through the acceptance of offices. This would have made it extremely difficult for the rightwing leaders to impose the reformist policy in the Congress. If we had not succeeded in preventing altogether the formation of Congress ministries, we could have surely bolted and barred the way to compromise and surrender.

8. As a result of the sterile attitude of the left on the issue of ministries, of the lack of unity in their ranks, of the lack of initiative to develop a sharp struggle against the new ministers the rightwing of the Congress succeeded in mobilising the general opinion in favour of its policy of accepting offices. It was able to capitalise the negative attitude of the left and to show its path as a practical militant path. M. N. Roy has lent his hand in this process very effectively. On the eve of Wardha considerable masses of vocal political opinion was already mobilised in support of the policy of forming ministries. The left was almost silenced. The rightwing leaders have succeeded in committing the INC to the formation of Congress ministries "to combat the New Act" on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programme on the other". Congress ministries will be soon formed in the six provinces where Congress commands a majority. Negotiation and machinations are afoot behind scenes in the other provinces to form Congress coalition ministries.

9. Unity in the entire ranks of the left is the crying need of the moment—unity on the issue of developing mass struggle to wreck the Constitution. We have to make a determined fight against the effort to divert the national movement to the plane of mere parliamentarism. But this cannot be done merely by crying ourselves hoarse that the rightwing leaders have committed the Congress to a policy of capitulations. This policy of capitulation must be fought concretely. We must explain to the masses that the Congress ministries do not mean a people's Government. Not a single demand can ever be enforced until the people are prepared to organise and to fight against Imperialism. Every strike, struggle, every mass demand of the peasantry, every act of repression of the Government official, must be made the object of mass demonstrations, of mass deputations to the ministers and to the Council Houses. Each one of the items of the Congress election manifesto as amplified in the Wardha Programme must be supported by mass demonstrations everywhere throughout the country. The Congress ministers are undoubtedly pledged to carry out these demands. But the extra-parliamentary action of the masses alone can strengthen their hands, keep them to the straight path of uncompromising struggle. The period of Congress ministries must be utilised to quicken the tempo of struggle on all fronts. We must not allow any grass to grow under the feet of the Congress ministers. "Fulfil our demands, redress our grievances or resign." This must be the cry which must go up from every nook and corner of the country—backed by mass demonstrations and struggle. This is the only way to raise the struggle against the Constitution to a higher level to combat the danger of diverting the struggle to reformist channels to smash the illusion of pure parliamentarism.

We call upon all left forces to unite forthwith to take the lead in calling united mass demonstration together with the INC in support of our main demands—

1. Release all Political Prisoners.
2. Refund all Securities Confiscated and Fines.
3. Repeal all Repressive Laws.
4. Remove all the Bans on Anti-Imperialist Organisations.



5. Recognise all Labour Unions.

6. Fulfil all Basic Demands of Workers and Peasants.

We call upon all Congress Committees, Labour and Peasant Unions to formulate their immediate partial demands and launch mass demonstrations in support of them.

## Tasks Before the Trade Union Congress

### A year of struggle

The Delhi Session of the Trade Union Congress meets against the background of a year of working-class struggles. It was a year of a wide spread strike wave which affected all the principal large-scale industries of India. There was a series of big strikes in the cotton textile industry of Gujrat and Central India. There were individual strikes of textile workers in other parts as well. In the Jute industry there were several strikes in 1936 and in the recent months the biggest general strike since 1929. On the Railways, the B. N. Ry. workers strike was the biggest Railway strike after the 1930 strike of the G.I.P. Railway.

It was a year when the enthusiasm for struggle and organisation siezed large masses of backward sections of workers in small industries and trades. The wide spread struggles of the municipal sweepers all over the Bombay Presidency, the strikes of Ekkawallas, Tongawallas, Saltpan workers, Gold-thread workers, Bidi workers and Toddy-Tappers are examples of this movement. The general strike of the town workers of Delhi in the spring of last year displayed clearly the strength and the sweep of this tendency.

It was a year of marked political activisation of the working-class. The recent election struggle gave us a measure of the growing political consciousness among the proletarian masses. In overwhelming majorities the working-class votes returned the verdict—in favour of the militant anti-Imperialist class policy of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and against the reformist and conciliatory policy of the National Federation of the

Trade Unions (NFTU) leaders. Political actions followed in the wake of this awakening. The effective participation of the working-class in the anti-Constitution demonstrations of April 1st—as seen in the protest strike of 40,000 textile workers of Bombay is a significant achievement of the year.

### **Organisation lags behind**

On the one hand we have this rising tempo of struggle, the dominant feature of which is the extensive strike action of the working-class—against wage cuts, mass dismissals, and for the right to organise Unions. On the other hand, we find little or no progress in the organised strength of the workers, in the conscious co-ordination of their basic struggles. Industrial strike action as measured by the loss of working days during the year 1934 is about half times the corresponding figure for the year 1935 (Government of India—Labour Ministries Department Statistics); but the rise in the number and the strength of labour not been correspondingly great. The conscious organisational effort on the part of vanguard of the working-class falls short of the spontaneous initiative of the mass as displayed in the wide spread strike struggles.

All the principal shortcomings of our Trade Union Movement today arise from the disparity between the rising tempo and the sweep of the mass struggle on the one hand and the conscious organisational effort on the other. Nobody is probably so conscious about these shortcomings than Trade Unionists themselves. The Bombay Session of the AITUC attempted probably for the first time a bit of self-criticism about its own work. The TUC correctly held that “considering the magnitude of the offensive launched against the workers by Capitalists and the Imperialist Government since the beginning of the world economic crisis and particularly during the last few years, Indian working-class has not been able to organise sufficiently powerful, much less an effective resistance to this joint onslaught. The terroristic policy of the Government directed towards suppressing every form of militant working-class activity has greatly hampered the resort to direct action by the workers.”

**The masses move forward**

Today, after a year of significant mass struggles of the workers in different industries against wage cuts and dismissals, we can put it differently. In spite of bans, mass arrests, lathi charges and firings, Indian workers are coming forward with spontaneous initiative for determined struggles in defence of their conditions of life and labour. There is a growing urge for Unity—Unity of struggle and of organisation. Ever newer sections of the working-class masses are being awakened to Trade Union consciousness, strikes are being fought on the issue of the recognition of Unions—against the suppression of Unions (Gokak Strike). Workers have unequivocally declared themselves in favour of the militant class policy of the AITUC. Conditions are ripe for building mass Unions in spite of repression—and to defeat repression. Bands of class conscious workers are coming forward in the numerous strike struggles, who have proved their mettle and their spirit of self-sacrifice by being in the forefront. A political cadre of the proletarian vanguard is growing. In the struggle against police and Government repression of strikes the masses of workers are awakening to political consciousness. A basis is growing for the launching of effective and independent political actions of the working-class, for initiating and realising the United National Front of the Indian people against Imperialism.

The masses of workers are moving forward in every direction. The organised forces of the Trade Union Movement are lagging behind. There is a lagging behind in achieving Unity in the Trade Union Movement—in developing the pressure of United Front actions of the rank and file workers against the capitalist offensive, to overcome the resistance of the reformist leaders to Unity. There is a lagging behind in the co-ordination and the linking up of the isolated struggle in the same industry, in the building up of mass Unions, in the training of Trade Union cadres, in the drawing in of the working-class in practical political activity. These shortcomings were noted and put on record by

the Bombay Session of the TUC, and certain immediate tasks outlined to overcome the same.

On the eve of the forthcoming Session it is necessary to review the progress made in fulfilling these tasks in the light of the experience of a year of struggle to note the failings and to chalk out the tasks for the next year. In general the main tasks before the TUC today are (1) the achievement of Trade Union Unity, (2) the co-ordination of scattered struggles of the workers in the various industries, (3) the creation of militant unions, (4) the training of cadres and (5) the developing of the political activities of the working-class. The last Session of the TUC formulated these tasks. Let us see where we stand today with reference to each of these.

## I

### THE QUESTION OF TRADE UNION UNITY

The question of achieving Unity of the Trade Union Movement in India, and the task of co-ordinating the struggles of the workers in the various industries assumes special importance in view of the growing offensive of the employers against the working-class. During the last twelve months there has been a concerted attack on the wages of the textile workers in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Indore, Bhavnagar and Beawar. The principal issue of the strikes in the textile industry in these places has been the attempt to enforce a cut amounting to 15% to 25% in the wages of the workers. The beginning of the last year saw the announcement of a further block retrenchment of 4,000 men by the Railway Board. There was an enforcement of longer hours of work for certain section of workers on the Railways. It was out of such grievance that the B.N. Ry. workers' strike arose. In the Jute Mill industry, the employers went over to full-time working without restoring the wage cut which they had imposed when short-time was introduced. The restoration of this cut was one of the demands of the recent Jute Mill workers' strike.

**Workers want Unity**

The resistance of the workers to the attacks of the employers is gaining in strength and magnitude; but its success largely depends upon the Unity of organisation and the co-ordination of the struggles throughout each particular industry. Lack of Unity is a serious obstacle in the way of workers struggle. The existence of parallel Unions on several railways, some of which do their best to sabotage every United action, makes the mobilisation of the masses of Railway workers for active resistance to retrenchment policy of the Railway Board extremely difficult. The existence of several Unions among the metal workers of Jamshedpur makes a United struggle against the Iron and Steel bosses an impossibility. The persistent refusal of the Majur Mahajan of Ahmedabad to join hands with the rest of the Trade Union Movement in India is a great hindrance to co-ordinating the struggles of the textile workers.

But the workers want Unity—and Unity of struggle is being spontaneously achieved by the workers. In the recent Jute Strike two and half lakh of workers very rapidly united for struggle under the banner of the Central Strike Committee although the majority of them were unorganised and the rest were organised in several different unions. The Railway workers want to Unite and to co-ordinate their struggle against retrenchment, against new reduced pay scales, and increased hours of work. The initial successes of the Retrenchment Resistance Committee formed by the militant Unions on the Railways proved it. The successes of the Joint Conference of G.I.P. Ry. workers show the same thing. The rapid spreading of the strike movement on the B.N. Ry. last year showed the spontaneous desire of the workers to achieve solidarity in action. In spite of the organised effort for Unity and co-ordination of the struggles in the various industries, the working-class masses are going into action and already gaining partial successes. The Government of India Labour Statistics for the year 1936 reveal that workers were successful in half the total number of strike which took place in that years.

### **The new strike wave ahead**

The question of Unity and co-ordination has become the most pressing question of the day for another reason. We are probably on the eve of a new strike wave in India. The strikes of the past five years were defensive strikes. The workers were defending their standard of living against the attacks of the employers who were attempting to save their profit transferring the burden of the depression on to the shoulders of the workers. Industrial strike wave which is impending, the workers will have to pass to the offensive struggle.

The depression of the last few years is being lifted. The world economy of Capitalism is rapidly passing "from the stage of recovery to the stage of prosperity." This of course a temporary phenomena caused by the vast schemes of re-armament of the Imperialist nations. In the meanwhile however, industrial production is rising, there is a boom in the world trade, and the prices of the manufactured goods are on the upgrade. The profits of the capitalists are rising. But there is also a rise in the cost of living of the working-classes caused by the advance in the prices of agricultural produce. There is a fall in the real wage of the workers (See E. Varga's economic survey for the 4th quarter of 1936 in *Impreccor* 10th March, '37). This contrary movement of the levels of profits and wages means the intensification of the exploitation of the worker and has become the basis of the new strike wave which is sweeping the capitalist countries of Europe and America today. Such a strike wave is bound to arise in India as well. The recent Jute strike is perhaps the first of such a new wave of strikes, in which the issue of struggle would not be the fighting back of a new wage cut but *the fight for the restoration of wage cuts imposed during the period of depression—the fight for wage-increase.*

The task before the militant centre of the Indian Trade Union Movement, the AITUC and especially before the revolutionary trade unionists working in it is to prepare the working-class organisationally for the coming struggles: This task consists principally in coming forward as the consistent fighters for the Unity of the working-class, as the initiators of the United Front

struggles of the workers against the attacks of the capitalists—and for the betterment of their conditions of wages and life. It is only by giving conscious lead and organisational form to the instinctive urge for Unity of the working-class masses, that we can move forward to the unification of parallel unions, to the creation of a single TU centre for India, to the co-ordination and unification of the scattered struggles of the workers in each industry.

### **Who obstruct Unity**

The Unity which the workers want, and the Unity for which the militants in Trade Union Movement and the Communists are fighting is the Unity in class-struggle. We want the Unity of the entire working-class to launch a determined struggle against the capitalists and the Government for higher wages and better living conditions and for the enforcement and the achievement of basic democratic rights of labour (right to organise, strike, etc.). Who are the most consistent opponents and enemies of the Unity? Of course the arch enemy of this Unity is the British Imperialist Government which is trying its best to smash the *entire* Trade Union Movement by means of repressive laws, by arrests, bans and by open police terrorism in the event of strikes. Its fury is in the main directed against the militant section of the TU Movement (AITUC); but it has not the slightest hesitation in attacking the Unions of NFTU as soon as they pass over to the position of United struggle (recent search in the B.N. Ry. Union Office, banning order on V. V. Giri in Kharagpur after the B.N. Ry. workers' strike).

A decade of persistent and everwidening repression has failed to smash the Trade Union Movement in India. There was certainly a setback and a series of splits were facilitated. Under the stress of repression the moderate wing of the AITUC split away at Nagpur bringing into existence several parallel unions. The Nagpur split took place, it will be remembered, against the background of the Meerut arrests. These splits were a setback no doubt but they undoubtedly laid the foundation of a bigger and a stronger Unity that is being forged today. They clarified the issues of struggle.



They placed the policy of class-struggle and of class-Unity in sharp contrast to the policy of class collaboration i.e. Unity and peace with the capitalists. The workers had two policies of unity and struggle before them.

During the course of the struggles which followed in the wake of the world depression the masses of workers have steadily been going over to the policy of class-struggle and class-Unity. The textile strike of 1934, the unification of the militants under the AITUC (1935) and the recent election results are landmarks in this process. Today a section of the leadership and rank and file of the NFTU are willing to unite with the AITUC on the basis of class-struggle (V. V. Giri and V. R. Kallapa group).

### **Imperialists and reactionaries oppose Unity**

The forces in favour of Trade Union Unity are growing. But there is still a long fight ahead against the obstructors of Unity. British Imperialism having failed to smash the Trade Union Movement by repression alone, is attempting to pursue a new tactic. It is trying to introduce company unionism in India through its own reliable agents. The New Ministry in Bengal is launching a well-financed campaign for creating such company unions among the Jute workers of Bengal—to split the Unity which they recently attained in the General Strike. The campaign is being directed by Suhrawardy, the Labour Minister, and Latafat Hussein, who was the NFTU candidate for the recent Assembly Elections, in the Labour Constituency for Barrackpur. Strong opposition to Unity comes from the reactionary leaders of the NFTU who are now openly allying themselves with the Government. Mr. Jamnadas Mehta was opposed to Unity with the AITUC even on the terms proposed by V. V. Giri. Mr. Jamnadas Mehta does not want Unity of class and anti-Imperialist struggle. He has proved it by his own personal example. He has joined the interim ministry, has achieved Unity with Imperialism, and is now attacking militant Trade Unionism from this position of vantage (expulsion of Comrade Sane and Sardesai of the G.I.P. Ry. Union from Sholapur). Imperialism and the reactionary leaders of the NFTU are the chief enemies of working-class

Unity. A correct understanding of this and the situation outlined above is necessary to outline our task and tactic in the struggle for Trade Union Unity.

### **M. N. Roy thinks otherwise**

The banal way in which M. N. Roy poses the question of Trade Union Unity is in keeping with his anti-Communist campaign, but is definitely against the interest of the struggle for Unity. "Reformists" says M. N. Roy "could no longer stand in the way to Unity as soon as the Communists regained their senses" (*Independent India*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 11). This conclusion follows from the vulgarised view he now talks of the history of the world Trade Union Movement. The whole post-war period of the rise of the revolutionary Trade Union Movement—the greatest achievement of which was the clear demarcation of the revolutionary policy of class-struggle from the opportunist policy of the reformist Trade Union bureaucrats, is to him an unnecessary episode. "In the past, ever since the foundation of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) that conflict (between the reformist and the revolutionary wings of the international Trade Union Movement) brought havoc to Trade Unions practically throughout the world." This is the Royist estimation of the more brilliant chapter of the history of the international proletarian movement—the chapter of the rise of the Communist International (CI), of the RILU, of the first victorious mass onslaught against reformist ideology and leadership which was threatening to paralyse the revolutionary forces of the world proletariat. It was a period of splits and rival organisations—of splits forced upon the Reds by the reformist bosses; but it was through this bitter struggle against the reformists that an alternative revolutionary working-class policy could be placed before the masses. It is this very, revolutionary vanguard which grew and consolidated itself in this bitter struggle against the reformist splitters which is coming forward today as the *initiator* and the consistent protagonist of the broadest Unity of the working-class. In the changed situation of today, the struggle against the enemies of Unity is being conducted in a new manner.

### **Lived Long but Learnt nothing**

We cannot prevent M. N. Roy from repudiating his own theory but we certainly cannot allow him to distort the past of revolutionary organisations to which he once belonged. "In India Communists are still standing loyally by the tradition of the RILU, *and consequently* obstructing the Unity of the Trade Union Movement." In the revised opinion of M. N. Roy the RILU has been obstructing the Unity of the Trade Union Movement. In 1920—since their very foundation, the CI and the RILU have made persistent efforts at achieving Unity with the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) (Unity Conference in Berlin) at realising United Front action of the proletariat against the post-war rationalisation offensive of the bourgeois Governments of Europe. These and the later efforts of the CI and RILU to achieve United action with the reformist Trade Unions against the Fascist onslaught are not unknown to M. N. Roy. But vilification, unlike self-criticism can only be passed on the suppression of facts, and the former and not the latter is the purpose of his weekly diatribes under the caption of "Live and Learn."

### **Tactics of the struggle for Unity**

The militants in the Trade Union Congress and the Communists are not fighting for Unity in the abstract. What they want is a fighting Unity of a consistent struggle against Capitalism. It is exactly this Unity which the reformists opposed. In the period when the reformist ideology dominated the entire Trade Union Movement, it was not enough to work within the reformist Trade Unions only. The formal Unity of these Unions was used by the reformist bureaucracy as an instrument to prevent and sabotage the wider Unity of struggle. It was essential to fight against this formal "Unity", to demonstrate the alternative revolutionary policy of struggle and Unity by coming out in open and bitter struggle against the reformist leadership. In the period of unshaken reformist dominance, it was only through this policy of sharp demarcation that working-class masses could be weaned away from reformism. A bitter and unrelenting struggle against the reformist leadership and a United Front of the rank and file

workers from below were the chief features of the struggle for Unity in this period. There were some sectarian mistakes in carrying out this policy both in Europe and in India, but that does not disprove the tactic as such.

But today the situation is different. The working-class masses have everywhere tasted the bitter fruits of the opportunist and capitulatory policy of the reformists. The proletarian masses are going over to action—are achieving the ever-widening Unity of struggle against capitalists offensive, against the Fascist onslaughts and against war. The influence of reformist ideology and leadership is waning and that of the revolutionary policy is increasing. Under the stress of the onrush of mass struggle the resistance of the reformists to Unity and struggle is being broken; sections of the reformist leadership are passing over to the position of Unity of struggle. In this situation it becomes possible to apply the tactics of United Front in a new way. The slogan of Unity all through—Unity from top to bottom *becomes the lever for unfolding ever broader United Front struggles* and thus breaking the remnants of the reformist resistance to struggle. This is the lesson we have to learn from the struggles and the successes of the movement for Trade Union Unity in France and in Spain.

### **Our tasks in the struggle for Unity**

It must be clearly understood that Trade Union Unity cannot be achieved in India by mere top negotiations. For M. N. Roy it is merely a question of the Communists giving in and the Unity is there. This is the most dangerous and mischievous perversion of facts. Has not the AITUC, including the Communists, voted to accept the unsatisfactory formula of V. V. Giri as a basis for further negotiations on Unity? Where then does the resistance to Unity come from? Does it not come from Mr. Jamnadas Mehta—the president of the BB & CI Ry. Employees Union (NFTU) and the leader of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation? Does it not come from the GIP Ry. Staff Union which is persistently on the move for the unification of the two parallel Unions on that Railway? Does it not come from some of the leaders of the AIRF who sabotaged the struggle of the All-India Railwaymen against retrenchment last year? Does it not come from the Major

Mahajan of Ahmedabad which wants to keep aloof from the TU Movement and isolate the two lakhs of textile workers of Ahmedabad from the struggles of the textile workers of the rest of India? M. N. Roy has not a word to say about them. To ignore these obstacles to Unity is to abjure the struggle for Trade Union Unity itself.

These obstacles cannot be overcome by means of negotiations alone. Negotiations for the achievement of final structural Unity will be continued; but we must strive hard to achieve Unity of action wherever possible on the basis of the agreement already achieved. The Joint Labour Board is there but does not function. The TUC must issue directives to its members on the Board to take initiative to make it function. But the best way to get the struggle for Unity going to begin at the bottom. The provincial Trade Union Committees should get into touch with the corresponding Committees of the NFTU with a view to form provincial Joint Labour Boards wherever possible. Through the formation of such joint boards in the provinces, it would be possible to widen the field of the joint activities. From joint meetings and demonstrations on May Day etc., it would be possible to go over to joint campaigns against anti-working-class legislations and against repression. It would be possible to form joint organisations for the legal defence of workers, for rendering relief to strikers in the local industries (such as the Workers' Defence League in Bombay).

The TUC Session must call upon TU leaders and the rank and file workers to take initiative in starting movement for the unification of the parallel unions wherever they exist. This movement must start from joint meetings, demonstrations, and conferences of rank and file workers on the issues of the common struggle against the employers. It is necessary to develop contacts with the leaders and the members of the parallel unions, and to convince them by our sincere and strenuous work in the interest of the struggle and the Unity of the workers. It is necessary to organise relief and aid for all strikes, no matter under whose leadership they are being fought. It is only through such persistent and sincere efforts at co-operation and participation in the day to

day struggles of the masses that a real mass movement for Unity—for the unification of Unions will grow. The final structural Unity with the NFTU can only be achieved through the development of such a struggle.

There is news from C.P. that there are chances of achieving Unity between the provincial units of the two Central Trade Union organisations on the basis of Mr. V. V. Giri's terms. The first step of this Unity is going to be the joint formulations of the legislative measures incorporating the basic demands and rights of the workers. But it must not stop there. The United mobilisation and the organisation of the workers *for struggle* on the basis of these demands must be the next step.

Events in France and Spain show graphically what the working-class can achieve by consolidating its forces and realising Trade Union Unity. In France the unification of the CCT and the CGTU and the magnificent strike struggles led to a growth in the ranks of the United Trade Union Centre from 1 to 4 million members; and this only within a few months. In Spain Unity has secured for the working-class important results in the economic struggle. Trade Union Unity in Spain is today the best guarantee for the victory of the People's Front over the Fascist insurgents. The lesson which we Communists and militant Trade Unionists in India must learn from our comrades in France and Spain is this that Trade Union Unity cannot be patched up round the negotiations table but will be forged in innumerable United Front Struggles in the factories and the streets.

## II

### UNIFICATION OF THE STRUGGLES IN EACH INDUSTRY

The question of Unity has another aspect. We have seen that during the last twelve months, there have been scattered but widespread strike struggles in each of the principal industries of India, in the Cotton Textiles, Jute and on the Railways. The gains of the workers in these struggles were small in comparison to the heroic sacrifices they made and the suffering they underwent. This was due to the lack of co-ordination and to the failure to mobilise the active support and sympathy of the entire mass of the

workers in the industry for these struggles. The Bombay Session of the AITUC decided to prepare "for convening the Conferences of workers of each industry and particularly the textile, railway, shipping, dock, mining and metal groups for formulating their immediate technical demands and preparing for direct action." The progress made in this direction during the year was little indeed. In the meanwhile struggles came in rapid succession and many more are still looming ahead. The question of organising workers' Conferences in each industry—on a sectional as well on a national scale—has become the most pressing question of the day.

### **Railway Workers' Conferences**

What was the progress made last year? On the Railways the Retrenchment Resistance Committee formed by the GIP Ry. Workers' Union and the BB & CI Ry. Employees Union (Red Flag) began its propaganda with a good start. This move was endorsed by the Bombay Session of the TUC, which emphasising the need for an All-India Railway Workers' Conference to prepare the workers to beat off the offensive of the Railway Board, "called upon the Railway Union to bring pressure to bear upon the A.I.R. Federation to hold such a conference at an early date". But the leaders of the Federation who are quite adept at passing resolutions of All-India Railway strike are equally adept at sabotaging the concrete preparations for any action. They could not be so easily moved to convene an All-India Railway Workers' Conference to discuss the ways and means of organising a United struggle of the Railway workers against the new offensive of block retrenchment and wage reduction. Resolutions are not enough. What is needed is the persistent pressure of protest meetings, UF demonstrations against retrenchment, of workers' conferences on individual Railways and joint conferences of workers on two or more Railways wherever possible. It was just this which we were unable to organise in sufficient magnitude during the last year. Thus it was that when the B.N. Ry. workers strike broke out, a really strong and nation-wide campaign of active support and solidarity with that heroic struggle could not be got going.

### **Workers' Conferences in the Textile Industry**

In the textile industry, there has been no effort to co-ordinate the struggles of the workers against the wage cut offensive of the employers since the First All-India Textile Workers' Conference of 1934. The concerted attack by the Millowners of Ahmedabad and Central India against the wages of the workers which called forth a series of strikes in those centres of Textile industry, brings the question of an All-India Textile Workers' Conference once more to the forefront. As a result of the isolationist policy of the Majur Mahajan of Ahmedabad—which controlled and influenced most of these strikes, the workers in Beawar, Baroda, and Indore had to submit to half the proposed cut. Such a policy is not in the interest of the Textile workers as it prevents the unification of their struggles.

In order to prepare for the All-India Textile Workers' Conference, it is necessary first to convene Textile Workers' Conference in each of the textile industry centres. These Conferences must be carefully prepared for. The preparatory propaganda for the Conference must reach every mill in the centre. The delegates to the Conference should be as far as possible elected in general meetings of the various mills. These delegates must be active agitators with influence among the workmen and having initiative. These delegates must be directed and helped (with a questionnaire) to collect all the facts about the demands and the grievances of the workers in their particular mill. Such properly prepared Conferences would be the best method of strengthening the Unions in each centre and would be the basis for the calling of the All-India Textile Workers' Conference and the formation of the AITW Federation.

### **Jute Mill Workers' Conference**

The calling of the Jute Mill Workers' Conference and the preparations for the linking up of the scattered struggles of the Jute workers was on the agenda of the Bengal provincial TUC since November last. A Sub-committee was appointed for the purpose but very little was actually done. In fact the preparation for the Conference, the popularisation of the basic demands and



the agitation for the need to evolve a unified organisation of the Jute workers to face the coming struggle, could very well have been linked up with the election propaganda which followed in the succeeding months. The demands of the Jute workers were popularised but the concrete preparations to achieve the Unity of struggle which was necessary to win those demands were not placed before the workers. Thus it was that when the recent General Strike of the Jute workers started workers were without any organisational preparations. In pursuance of the resolution of the E.C. of the AITUC the First All-Bengal Jute Workers' Conference was held on 28th of March, when the strike was already rapidly spreading. There was hardly time to make proper preparations. However the Conference was a significant step towards the coordination of the struggles and the organisation of the workers in the Jute Industry. It brought all the militant Unions in the Jute Industry under a single organisation—the Central Strike Committee. It laid the foundations of the broader Unity of the rank and file workers by deciding to include two representatives from every mill on strike in the Strike Committee. The significance of these steps was not properly explained to the masses of the strikers. Rank and file Unity and initiative was not reinforced by the formation of Local Strike Committees linked up with the central one (with the exception of Barrackpore area where a Local Strike Committee was formed and functioned effectively). Focussing the attention of the workers on the Central Strike Committee as the symbol of their mighty class Unity in struggle against the Jute bosses *during the progress of the strike itself* would have helped to popularise the idea of the single United Jute Mill Workers' Union.

The situation created by the calling off of the strike is extremely favourable for the building up of such a United Union. All the Trade Union groups active among the Jute workers must unite in this supreme task and defeat the move of the Suhrawardy-Latafat Hussain & Co., to form a black-leg Union with a communal bias. The game of the Bengal Government is out to split the Unity of the workers, to shelve the enquiry into their grievances and to convert the moral victory of the workers into a defeat. In order to

foil this game it is necessary to prepare for a Second Jute Workers' Conference. The purpose of this Conference will be two-fold. (1) The preparation for the Conference will consolidate the Unity already achieved, while the Conference itself will be the occasion of the inauguration of the United Union and the election of its executive. (2) The Conference will be the workers' tribune from which a well documented case for the withdrawal of the wage cut and the other demands will be given to the public. The preparation for the Conference and the launching of the United Union will consist in the formation of provisional mill and local committees drawing in all the rank and file leading cadres who come forward during the process of the struggle. The task of these Committees will be not only to enlist members but also to collect statistics about wages and rates in the different mills in their respective area, enlisting in this work the co-operation of the general mass of workers and mill clerks.

### **A Basic Draft for each Conference**

In connection with these Conferences, a special task devolves to the AITUC as the Central leading organ of the Trade Union Movement. In order to prepare for each of these Conferences, basic reports shall have to be made. These would form effective weapons in the hands of the local Committees and Trade Unionists for carrying on propaganda agitation among the workers for these Conferences. These reports will be put into the hands of the local Trade Unionists as a general historical survey of the struggles, demand conditions of the workers in a given industry and also the salient facts about the growth of the industry itself and the profits the capitalists are making. Such a survey is quite essential for the local Trade Unionist to make his agitation effective but it is always impossible for him to find the time and the means to make it up in himself. Generally speaking these basic draft reports should cover the following points:—(1) Survey of the growth and the expansion of the industry—its profits etc. on the basis of the published balance-sheets and reports. (2) Review of the conditions of life, labour and wages of the workers in the industry on the basis of the Government reports. Labour office investigations

etc.—showing how real and money wages are deteriorating, how the intensity of labour is rising—showing the effect of New Labour Legislation upon them. (3) Historical survey of the struggles of the workers in that industry—giving statistics and brief accounts of the various strikes, the changes effected because of them in the conditions of the workers. Summarising the results and the experience of these struggles and pointing out the main failings of the present state of organisation and drawing from them the tasks and lessons for the future. (4) Tentative basic draft of demands based upon the above analysis. (5) Suggestions to Local Trade Unionists regarding collection of new facts about the present conditions of the workers in the various mills and shops—with questionnaires to be filled in by workers and on the basis of which the final exhaustive list of local and general demands is to be framed for the Conference.

It is necessary for the AITUC to make a beginning in this direction, to appoint sub-committees for the preparation of such reports for the principal industries—Railways, Jute, Cotton, Metal Engineering, Mining etc. Such reports prepared in a popular style and made available in the Indian languages will be a step forward the training of Trade Union cadres. Through such reports we shall be able to transmit the experience of the past struggles to the new cadres coming forward during the process of the struggle.

### III

#### CREATION OF MASS UNIONS

If one goes over the list of the Unions affiliated to the AITUC (1936), one will find that out of 71 Unions, 59 have a membership of less than 1,000. This lack of extensive mass membership and the consequent effective contact between the Trade Unions, and their executive on the one hand and the workers represented by them on the other was noted by the Session of the AITUC. The creation of new mass Unions and the giving of live mass basis to the one already existing is one of the basic tasks before the TUC.

There is a notion current among some Trade Unionists that mass Unions are not possible in India. The two reasons generally given, are the conditions of Imperialist repression and the absence of capitalist prosperity. Some even go so far as to maintain that Unions in India could be nothing more than permanent strike Committees—which command mass following in the periods of struggle. Stable Unions with paying mass membership, it is said, are not possible. This is a most dangerous notion; it is as defeatist as it is false.

Of course the employers and Imperialist Government are not going to make it easy for us to form mass Unions. Trade Unionism wherever it has grown into mass movement has done so in the teeth of and in bitter struggle against repression. Were not the early European Trade Unions built up in struggle against anti-Association and anti-Socialist Laws? Repression is certainly a hindrance, but it can be fought back. Indian workers have time and again displayed their will and determination to defend their Unity against repression. In Gokak, three thousand textile workers fought a strike for over six months against the dismissal of clerks and peons of the mill for being members of the Managing Committee of the Union.

Similarly, the lack of prosperity is mostly the specious argument of the capitalists themselves. What the Indian workers are fighting for today are *human* conditions of life, labour and wages—and these concessions both the British as well as Indian capitalists here are in a position to make. We have seen that even with the existing organisation workers have been able to win some concessions in 50% of the strikes which took place in 1936.

### **Why we failed to build them**

Those who maintain that mass Unions are not possible in India, are inventing a theory to cover up their own failings. What is required is not a theory to rationalise our inactivity but a diligent search for the failings which act as hindrance to the growth of mass Unions. What are these failings? Firstly, there is the traditional lack of enthusiasm to do day-to-day Trade Union work, to attend to the daily petty grievances of the workers and fight for them. Even in industrial centres which have a highly developed

and politically conscious vanguard, there are still vast masses of workers who have not reached even the elementary stage of Trade Union consciousness. It is necessary to reach out to them. This can be done by coming out persistently and patiently as the defenders and fighter for their innumerable day-to-day interests and demands. The non-recognition of Unions by the owners makes this work all the more necessary. Apart from representing the individual grievances to the employers, it is necessary to expose the most typical and flagrant of them in the press, to fight against all breaches of the Labour Legislations by the employers, to bring the pressure of public opinion and working-class organisations to bear upon the capitalists on all these issues. The experience of some of our own Unions, where we have put in such strenuous work does show that you can build up a mass membership on the basis of such work. This work is absolutely essential for the fighting of the legality of the Unions and for their recognition by the employers.

Secondly, there is the lack of systematic day-to-day educational work among the Union membership as well as among the unorganised workers. Every branch Union office must become the centre of attraction to the masses of workers living in the neighbourhood. It must be the centre to get reading material, for meetings, for talks, study-circles, and even for educational activity of the ordinary type. Elementary study-courses must concentrate on working-class history and struggles both in India and abroad, on the rise and the development of Trade Unions, of strikes and of their place in national struggles. The masses are eager to know, to learn and to read. If we know how to organise the educational activity so that it corresponds to the level of the development of the workers in a given locality, if we could approach them by giving them knowledge of the concrete experience of the working-class struggles at home and abroad, if our expositions could be more interesting—more in the tongue and the idiom of the masses, our study-circles would not be depleted and our branch offices not empty. Properly organised educational activity, would be a powerful instrument in making our Unions popular and mass Unions.

**Bolshevik mass work needed**

Thirdly, our failure to shift the centre of our Trade Union activity to the mill, the workshop and the department is a hindrance *mass Union* can arise and rest, our active rank and file Trade Union cadre must be *at work* in the mills and the shops, doing day-to-day agitational work on the spot against the daily oppressions, the pinpricks and the tricks of speeding up etc. of the employers and their agents. It is through such agitational work and by reacting instantaneously to the daily attacks of the employers that effective and influential mill and shop, and department Committees can be built grouping the entire mass membership of the Union round them. The Millowner will of course seek out and victimise the most effective mill Committee leaders; but unless we persist in our attempts to form and function Mill Committees, combine secret with open agitational work in the mills to protect the leading cadres, unless we are able to mobilise the support of the entire mass of the workers in the mill or shop in defence of the Committee, we shall never be able to fight back victimisation, and establish the right of the workers to organise.

The denial of the possibility of the formation of mass Unions is the denial to do Bolshevik mass work. What is not possible in India is reformist mass Unionism. Time and again the masses of Indian workers have displayed by their strike actions, by their election verdicts that they are willing to rally round the banner of revolutionary Trade Unionism. Time and again have they shown their unequivocal rejection of reformism and of reformist leadership. Given the Bolshevik initiative and dash in agitational and organisation work—given the Bolshevik patience and persistence in doing day-to-day Trade Union and Educational work—militant mass Unions would be a reality in the near future.

## IV

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT & THE NATIONAL  
STRUGGLE

The struggle for Trade Union Unity, for the co-ordination of the struggles in the various industries and for the creation of mass

Unions is not a chapter apart and separate from the National struggle. This struggle of the working-class for the defence of its economic interest is being fought in the setting of the larger struggle of the Indian people as a whole against Imperialist exploitation—for National Independence, democracy and bread. In the Trade Union Movement the working-class is creating a new model of organisation, a new form of struggle, which will become a powerful instrument for the emancipation of the millions of the toilers both in the town and the country side. It is destined to place its characteristic impress on the national movement and convert it into consistent revolutionary struggle of the entire people against Imperialism. The Trade Union Movement has an important and a leading role to play in the National Revolutionary Struggle.

### **United National Front**

The overwhelming majority of our people today are United under the Indian National Congress (INC), in their struggle against the new autocratic Constitution, against Imperialist repression, for the winning of their basic economic demands. It is necessary to deepen and broaden this Unity, to transform it into a fighting Unity of the National Front of the people against Imperialism. That is why the Trade Union Congress seeks to achieve United Front with the INC, seeks to build on the basis of the INC and in alliance with it a United National Front of the toilers and of all sections of the people who are willing to fight Imperialism. It seeks Collective-Affiliation to the INC in order to be able to give a revolutionary turn to the National movement by enriching with the specific forms of struggle and organisation characteristic of the working-class.

The last Session of the TUC bestowed considerable attention to all these problems. It recommended a complete scheme of Collective Affiliation of TUs for the consideration of the INC. It decided to immediately realise in practice, United Front Actions in collaboration with the INC and the CSP (Congress Socialist Party) on all anti-Imperialist issues. It called upon the INC to support the immediate economic and political demands of the working-class and its struggle for these demands. It decided to co-operate with the INC to carry on joint electoral campaign and

finally resolved to develop mass protest-strikes of workers on political issues as a specific form of working-class participation in the National struggle.

### **Obstacles to United National Front**

When we review the results of the working out of this programme of United Front, we find that there have been serious hindrance in the path of its development. The struggle for the elections to the provincial Assemblies under the New Constitution was an excellent opportunity for effecting the unification of all the anti-Imperialist forces to combat the New Constitution and to prepare them to launch a powerful attack against it. The AITUC decided to fight the elections on an independent electoral platform of developing mass struggle against the Constitution and of the basic democratic rights and the economic demands of the toilers. The AITUC declared its resolve to forge a joint anti-Imperialist Front on the basis of this programme and agreed to collaborate with the INC in the election struggle.

But the chief hindrance to the development of the United Front came from the Congress Parliamentary Board (CPB)—which was dominated by the right-wing Congress leaders. In spite of the declarations of the Congress President and of the Congress election manifesto to form Joint Anti-Imperialist Front, the CPB refused to accept the anti-Imperialist candidates of the AITUC, while it made pacts with reactionaries, Rai-Bahadurs and put them up as candidates. In Madras it refused to allow the candidates of the INC to sign the Kisan pledge, which without replacing the Congress pledge merely widened it by the inclusion of the class demands of the peasantry. Disciplinary actions were threatened against INC members who supported the anti-Imperialist candidate of the AITUC (S.A. Dange's case). While the official Congress resolutions speak of mass contact with independent workers and peasants organisations, the Right-wing leaders like Valabhbhai run down independent workers and peasant organisations. In Bengal the Right-wing leaders of the INC are threatening disciplinary action against Comrades Dutt Mazumdar and Bankim Mukherjee for forming Labour Peasant Parliamentary Party which stands for a radical Labour



and Agrarian programme while supporting the anti-Imperialist programme of the INC. In the Central Assembly the Right-wing Congress leaders have more than once been instrumental in getting anti-working-class legislation passed (Ammendment to Payment of Wages Act in April 1937).

### **Defeat the saboteurs of Unity**

These hindrances to United Front do not belie the fact that there is a growing trend among the rank and file and among a section of the leadership, in favour of building the United National Front in collaboration with anti-Imperialist organisations of workers and peasants. The task of the TUC is to work in co-operation with these forces, to develop United Front from below and in action—and to bring mass pressure to bear upon the saboteurs of Unity and anti-Imperialist struggle. The TUC and especially the militants in the TUC have already set an example. The serious provocation to which the militant Trade Unionists and Communists were subjected in connection with the election campaign for the TUC candidate in Bombay, did not prevent them from working for United Front action on the Anti-Constitution Day. On that day 40,000 textile workers came out on protest strike in response to the call of the TUC. In Sholapur a joint UF Election Committee of the local Congress Committee and the Trade Unions functioned with grand success. The successful United Front demonstrations on May Day in Bombay in which BPCC (Bombay Provincial Congress Committee) officially participated for the first time together with the BPTUC (Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress) and the other anti-Imperialist organisations is another example of what local initiative can achieve.

United Front with the INC can and must be achieved in action and from below and the resistance of the Right-wing leaders to it broken. In order to implement its programme of United Front, in order to fight for the achievement of Collective Affiliation, the TUC must issue concrete instructions to its Unions to build the UF with the Congress on a local scale wherever possible; (1) The Trade Unions and TU Committees should develop close contacts with the local Units of the INC and attempt to achieve United mass action (meetings, demonstrations, etc.) on all anti-Imperialist

and working-class issues. It is necessary for Trade Unionists and politically conscious workers to join the Congress individually in order to fight for United Front and for Collective Affiliation from within. (2) Every strike of the workers against wage cut, dismissals or for the recognition of Union, every struggle against repressive and anti-working-class measures, has a significance not merely as a struggle of the proletarians against capitalists, but also as a part of the general struggle of the people for democratic rights. It is both possible and necessary to enlist the sympathy and the support of the people and the rank and file of the local INC in its favour. Today the Congress generally passes a resolution of sympathy and support for every major working-class struggle. We must fight and mobilise for a more effective and active support. We must work for the fraternisation of the workers' struggles by the INC rank and file and its lower units and in this way exert pressure on the higher Committees to actively support the struggle. (3) On the other hand the Trade Unions must participate in every National Day celebrations, must come out in demonstrations and meetings at every act of Imperialist repression, against the National movement or its leaders. With the rising political consciousness of the working-class this participation must take the form of political protest strikes which become more and more wide-spread as the tempo of the struggle rises.

### **T.U.C. and Labour Groups in the Legislatures**

In order that the Trade Unions and the working-class participate effectively in the National struggle, in order that they play the role of the effective moving spirit in the United National Front, they must strengthen themselves as independent class organs of struggles. Trade Unions will become a source of strength to the National struggle and the UNF only in as much they preserve their class identity and come forward as the protagonists of a distinct form of revolutionary struggle for the achievement of the immediate common aims. This question of preserving the political and class independence of the AITUC vis-a-vis the INC has arisen of late in connection with the formation of labour and peasant blocks in the Provincial Assemblies. The failure of the E.C. of the AITUC to formulate a

uniform and a clear-cut policy with reference to these Labour and peasant blocs has led to a lot of confusion on this point. The Election Manifesto of the AITUC with its clearly defined attitude towards anti-Imperialist struggle and the acceptance of all the basic economic demands of the workers and peasants could have been a basis for the formation of Labour-peasant blocs in the provinces, consisting of the TUC MLAs, the AIKC (All-India Kisan Committee) MLAs and the left MLAs of the NFTU (like Giri, Kallappa, etc.). The E.C. meeting of the TUC at Delhi in March last failed to give a clear lead on this question. The relation of the TUC groups of MLAs who were pledged to the TUC Election manifesto, to the INC or to the other Labour and Peasant MLAs, (NFTU etc.) was not clearly defined. It would have been correct for the AITUC to form independent labour and peasant groups, based on the TUC Election platform, distinct from the Congress parliamentary parties but pledging its full support to the INC in its struggle against the Constitution and reserving for itself complete independence on all Labour and Peasant issues. The fact that certain TUC legislators had signed the INC pledge undoubtedly created a difficult situation; but this was no reason to give the go-bye to the principle of independence which was implicit in the TUC Election Manifesto itself.

This want to clearly defined lead has created the difficult situation in Bengal with reference to the independent Labour and Peasant alliance formed by TUC legislators in alliance with the peasant candidates of the Krishak Samities there. The parliamentary platform of this group is based on the election platform of the AITUC with the addition of the specific demands of the local workers and peasants. The Right-wing leaders of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, whose opposition to the independent peasant programme and organisation is well-known, are threatening disciplinary action on the two TUC legislators who happen to be AICC members as well. This action of the BPCC is not only against the interests of the workers and peasants but is also against the development of the United Front with the INC. The AITUC Session must support the two TUC legislators in Bengal in their demand upon the INC to be allowed to be members of a labour and peasant group which while whole-

heartedly supporting the anti-Constitution and anti-Imperialist fight of the INC stands for the expression and the defence of the class aspirations of the workers and peasants of Bengal in the sense and spirit of the TUC Election Manifesto itself. Where the situation has already been complicated by the TUC legislators signing the INC pledge, the AITUC should take the initiative in forming TUC or Labour and AIKC groups inside the Congress Parliamentary Parties and demand from the INC complete independence for them to initiate legislation affecting labour and peasants and to vote on all matters vitally affecting Labour and Peasantry.

## V

### THE QUESTION OF CADRES

In the foregoing pages we have outlined the main tasks which face the forthcoming TUC Session. But the chief obstacle today which prevents us from discharging these tasks efficiently is the question of the lack of cadres. What is this lack due to? Is it due to the backwardness, ignorance and illiteracy of the Indian proletariat? Is it due to the lack of Socialist orientation of the part of politically conscious intelligentsia? These surely are not the reasons of our lack of TU cadres. During the recent strike struggles a great number of rank and file working-class leaders have been thrown up who form the potential material for our cadres. Similarly, especially during recent years there is a growth in the number of socialistically orientated intellectuals who are coming forward to work in the political field (the growth of the CSP). The reason of the lack of properly trained cadres is not the want of suitable human material but the organisational effort for their training.

The TUC is keenly conscious of this failing but it has as yet not formulated a concrete scheme to overcome it. We do not think that the problem can be solved by *mere* multiplication of study-circles or merely by the organisation of Labour Schools for Trade Union and political courses. A systematic drive for the organisation of the training of TU functionaries and leaders from the rank and file workers is of course absolutely essential and must be immediately

taken in hand. But this will become more effective when it is coupled with a scheme of the rejuvenation of the TUC itself. Cadres cannot be trained by mere study-courses however efficient, if this training is not coupled with the participation in the TU struggle and organisation under the guidance of a leadership which interprets the experience of the struggle to the masses and helps them to assimilate it. The TUC today does not represent such a leadership. Comrade S. H. Jhabwalla was right when he said in his Reception address to the last Session that "the TUC has simply been a deliberative body, practically making no efforts to co-ordinate the working-class struggle". The co-ordination, the centralising of the struggle of the workers, introducing Unity of Action among them *on a National scale*, means the co-ordination of the unification of the experience of the struggles of the workers, their interpretation to, and their assimilation by the leading cadres. The worker becomes Trade Union conscious through his own experience of his individual struggles but through his efforts alone he does not attain the generalised experience of the working-class struggle. This must be transmitted to him by the leading organs of struggle, the TUC and the political party of the working-class, the CP (Communist Party), under whose guidance he fights.

### **Wanted a Central TUC Secretariat**

We are here concerned merely to formulate the immediate tasks which the TUC must undertake in order to rejuvenate itself in order "to transform itself into a genuinely national organ of the class-struggle of the Indian workers in live contact with day-to-day problems of the workers", in order to create the best conditions for the training of efficient TUC cadres on an all India scale. These tasks are three-fold—(1) organisation of a permanent secretariat for the AITUC as well as for the provincial TU Committees (2) The organisation of a propaganda department—the Labour Information Bureau and (3) the publication of a Central TUC Bulletin—not merely as a TU News Service but as the leading organ of the AITUC giving the lead to provincial and Vernacular TU organs. It is not necessary here to deal at length with these tasks but to show the need for them. The

need for them is already keenly felt by all Trade Unionists. These questions are raised at every session but the task not taken in hand as they appear to some as too elaborate to be taken up at this stage. We have now reached a stage in the development of the TU movement when further progress would not be possible at all unless we immediately take up these tasks in hand. A special drive for mobilising funds must be made to achieve these tasks.

The organisation of an *All-India Secretariat* is an immediate necessity. What is required is not an office to deal with the increasing correspondence, etc., but a *whole time leadership* (elected every year) consisting of experienced Trade Unionists which functions between the Sessions of the E.C. of the AITUC. Its task is to see to the carrying out of the decisions of the E.C. and of the Annual Session to keep contact with the TUs and the provincial Committees, to give lead to them by issuing manifestoes and circulars on all urgent and immediate questions in accordance with the TUC resolutions, to draft resolutions for the coming Sessions of the TUC and the E.C. in time and circulate them to all the TUs and the provincial Committees.

A *Central Labour Information Buro* is another of the urgent needs of the TUC. The Central Organisation of the Indian working-class cannot be without a proper machinery for the collection, sifting and collation of facts and statistics about the various problems which concern the industrial workers of India. For the training of cadres it is necessary to make available in print the rich experience of the struggles and the organisation of the Indian workers during the last 20 years. For making them effective in the day-to-day propaganda and agitation it is necessary to place in their hands well documented information in popular form about the current problems in each industry e.g., retrenchment on the Railways, history of wage-cuts in the Bombay textile mills, history and the growth of Labour Legislation in India, etc. It is necessary to supply propaganda and agitational material for the local and vernacular TU press. It is necessary to work out a series of popular pamphlets for the use of training courses and trainers. All this work can best be done by a *Central Labour Information Buro*. Worked by a small band of whole time research workers under the guidance of the secretariat and the

E.C. of the AITUC. Socialist cadres coming forward under the influence of the CSP would find suitable field of co-operation with TUC in this type of work. The Congress Socialist had given publicity to a scheme like this through its columns last year, which we recommend for the consideration of the AITUC.

### **TUC Bulletin**

Since last year the AITUC is publishing a News Bulletin for the press. This is very scrappy and gives hardly more news than what has already appeared in the legal press. With the organisation of the secretariat and the Information Buro, it should be possible to bring out a TUC Bulletin as the organ of the AITUC. Through this Bulletin, the secretariat and the E.C. of the AITUC would be able to link itself up with the provincial and local Committees and Unions and correlate their activities. Through it the secretariat will be able to give lead to the entire TU movement on all day-to-day issues of the economic and political struggle of the workers. This Bulletin would be the monitor and the guide of all local vernacular TU and labour organs.

These then are the main tasks which confront the AITUC today. The urgent need of the hour is to liquidate the backwardness of the leading organisations. The masses are moving forward into action and struggle. It is necessary for the organisation and the conscious leadership to catch up with the rising tempo of mass struggle to transform the AITUC into a genuine leading organ of struggle of the Indian Proletariat to take its proper place in the struggle for the freedom of our country and the liberation of the toiling masses from all exploitation.

### **LETTER FROM DEOLI DETENTION CAMP**

I am glad to inform you that we did manage to celebrate the November Day here and not unsuccessfully. Most of the detainees enthusiastically participated in it. The 'Red Menace' has seized the minds of authorities here since then. Any indent having a red colour is not sanctioned, even a red pencil is not allowed. Letters, papers and books are being mercilessly censored. Even the reactionary newspapers which we are condemned to read, like the Statesman and the Snjiwani, have whole columns cut out for us.

Even from the very respectable foreign magazines like the World Review or the Manchester Guardian etc., we are not supposed to read any Soviet News information about the United Front Movement in France and Spain or elsewhere, entire columns and even pages are missing. Some of us tried to get Marxian philosophical works like Lenin's Empirio-Criticism or Engel's Anti-Duhring and of course failed. Even fiction which is suspected of being Left is not meant for us. It has been ascertained by us from non-official sources that the Government has got the wind up—the Bolshevik bacilli!

It would have been surprising indeed, after the November Day celebrations, if nothing unusual had happened to break the dull monotony of our daily lives. Soon after came the Home Member of the Government of India followed by the Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau. You can yourself imagine the object of their visit! We saw how particular they were to inspect the spot where the November Day had been celebrated.

You ask what Deoli is like? Recall the Nazi Concentration Camps and you will get the complete picture in your mind. There is over-congestion. Barracks are too narrow and we are compelled to live huddled together under low roofs. There are no adequate arrangements for water, bath, latrines or lights. There is hardly any protection against the unbearable heat which goes up to 127 degrees in summer and the bitter cold when the freezing point is almost reached. Then there are dust-storms, a nuisance common to both the seasons.

The authorities have their rules for every routine and red-tapism is more rigorous than in any other department of the Government. There is a fairly well-equipped hospital here but the detainees suffer all the same, from the callousness of the medical authorities. Even the most serious cases are very often ignored and no proper and timely diagnosis made. There is no proper drainage system. Flies and mosquitoes breed like.....and detainees continue to suffer from serious diseases throughout the year. This should be enough for you.

We are doing all that we can to raise high the banner of Communism and dream of the day when we will be able to join you outside and fight shoulder to shoulder for the emancipation of our country. Red Front!



## **The General Strike of The Jute Workers of Bengal**

The recent General Strike of the jute workers of Bengal would form a significant landmark in the history of the Indian working class. It was the biggest strike which the Bengal Jute Industry had ever seen. According to the official report, 2.9 million working days were lost in the jute strike of 1929. In the recent strike, at least 3.5 million working days were lost at a very moderate estimate.

### **The Significance of the Strike**

It was not merely the biggest strike in the Jute Industry. It was a struggle which for the first time united almost all the Jute workers in a single action under a single leadership. The overwhelming majority of the Jute mill workers in the entire jute mill area which stretches along both the banks of the Ganges over a length of over 60 miles, were drawn into the struggle. During the course of the struggle, the spirit of class solidarity and unity has grown among the workers. The spirit of revolt is assuming a more conscious and organised form. The attempts of strike-breakers and provocateurs failed to break the unity of the workers. Their plan to organise communal riots was miscarried. The immediate material gains of the strike however have been negligible. A moral victory has been won. The stage is set for

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another advance towards a powerful centralised and united organisation of the jute workers of Bengal—based on a network of live and fighting mill-and department-committees. A bigger and a more organised and a well-prepared for struggle is ahead. It is all the more necessary, therefore to take a view of the recent strike struggle—to appreciate its achievements, to take stock of the failings and to draw the lessons for the future.

### **A World-Wide Strike Wave**

The Jute Strike of 1937 is significant for another reason. It is perhaps the first resounding echo in India of a strike wave which is sweeping over Europe and America at present. The world depression which lasted for over five years is being lifted. A re-armament boom is rapidly taking its place.

The index of industrial production for the capitalist world has risen from 65 in 1932 to 101 in 1936. The volume of world trade and shipping is on the upgrade. Prices are rising and so are the profits of capitalist concerns. Simultaneously the cost of living is rising but the wages of workers which were reduced in the days of depression are not rising. This contradictory movement of profits and real wages is the basis of the new strike wave.

The rising strikewave in England is graphically described by R.P.Dutt in the following words: "Against the orgies of War profiteering and speculating, against the hellish speed up and intensification of Labour, against the rising prices and falling wages, the workers are moving into action... The Pot is boiling over". The miners, the Busmen, the Railwaymen, the Engineering apprentices on the Clydeside, the workers in aero-engine factories—all are moving into action demanding increase in wages and better conditions.

In America too the strike wave is rising in the motor and the steel industries. A gigantic strike in the oilfields of Mexico is in progress.

In France, the workers have already won significant victories because of the powerful Unity of the working class which they have built.

### **In India too**

The effects of the Re-armament boom of the capitalist world are being felt in India too. The Indian industries which are directly linked up with the world trade and with the world armament industry are already experiencing the boom. These industries are Jute, Iron and Steel. The jute industry is fully occupied—is working full-time and at top speed. Iron and Steel industry is rapidly expanding to meet the world's growing demand for pig-iron. This general prosperity is bound to make itself felt in the other Indian Industries as well. But with the rise of prices and profits the cost of living of the working class is also steadily rising. From the cost of living index for Bombay workers as worked out by the Bombay Labour offices, we see that the curve is steadily on the upgrade since the first quarter of 1934. The cost of living in 1937 (1st quarter) is 10 points higher than in 1934. The same tendency is visible in all the other industrial centres. The New Boom period means more profit to the capitalists—but to the workers it means 'speed up', further intensification of Labour and a curtailment of real wages. Nowhere are the capitalists willing to restore the wage-cuts which they imposed upon the workers in the name of depression. The new strike wave in India will be the Workers' offensive for the restoration of these wage-cuts—for wage increase, and against mass dismissals—against new form, of the intensification of Labour. The recent Jute strike and the day-to-day struggle of the jute workers which is now proceeding is the first of the new round of working class struggles which are ahead.

## **II**

### **The Background of the Struggle—The Jute Industry**

"Capital comes into the world oozing blood from every pore"—wrote Marx. This saying is true of every rupee of the gigantic capital which the jute bosses have accumulated in the jute industry in Bengal. On the one hand we have "the Romance" of the phenomenal growth of this mighty monopoly industry during the last sixty years; and on the other hand we have the most

gruesome tale of the exploitation of the lakhs of Indian workers whose lives have gone to build the fortunes of the capitalists and the dividend-grabbers of Dundee and London. During the course of seventy-eight years, the capital in the Jute industry rose from a trifle of about 30 lakhs to the colossal figure of 23 crores which is the present figure. The number of looms rose from a hundred to 64,872 looms, which is the figure given by Sir Alexander Murray on the 13th March 1930 in his speech before the 64th Annual meeting of the Samnagore Jute Factory & Co., which has its head office at Dundee. The tale of the enormous profits made by the Jute companies during the years of War and the years immediately succeeding it is too well known to be repeated here. Comrade Sudhin Pramanik in his presidential address before the Nungi Jute Workers' Conference, has set down figures of the colossal profits reaped by the jute magnates in the five years of war. The Millowners themselves admit that they made during the war three times the profits per loom which they made in the years before. Basing himself on the figures of the low price of Raw Jute and the high price of manufactured Jute, Comrade Pramanik estimates that the jute capitalists must have made a profit of about 120 crores of Rupees in the five years of war. It is quite clear that though the major part of the huge capital in the jute industry is owned by foreigners, all of it has been accumulated in India out of the sweat of Indian workers and peasants.

While capital has increased tenfold and hundredfold, while the number and the efficiency of the mechanical instruments of labour has been increased at great cost, the human instruments of labour are being sweated and exploited under the same horrible condition; for decades. The starvation wages, bad housing conditions, corruption and bribery of Sardars and Jobbers (recruiters of labour), beatings and physical assaults of the workers by the mill officers, and a system of indiscriminate fines continue to be the main features of the Jute worker's life even today.

Against these unbearable conditions, the workers revolted from time to time. In 1920-21 there were something like 37 strikes

affecting jute and other factories. In 1929 there was a general strike against the cut in the "Khoraki" (dear food allowance) and against bribery and other minor grievances. On both these occasions committees of inquiry were appointed. Various recommendations were made. The millowners agreed to check the bribery of the Sardars etc. But the conditions remained unchanged. The Foreign jute capitalists not only dominate the entire jute industry in Bengal, but they dominate the Government in Bengal as well. This same picture of the misery of the jute workers emerges out of the volumes of evidence and the report of the Whitley Commission on Labour which finished its work at the end of 1929.

### **The World Depression**

The huge profits of the war and the post-war boom did not make the slightest difference to the lot of the workers. It is true that between 1917-18 and 1928-29 the wages of spinners and weavers rose by 22%; but the cost of living rose during the period. In Bombay the cost of living index for workers rose from 100 in July 1914 to 148 in 1928-29, i.e., by 32%. In the absence of similar figures for Calcutta workers, we may take it that a similar rise in the cost of living took place in Calcutta as well. In the years of profits the jute workers instead of gaining anything lost in real wages.

In the boom period, the jute bosses kept their fat profits for themselves; but as soon as the world depression of 1929 began to be felt in India, they generously came forward with schemes of transferring the burden of the depression on to the shoulders of the workers. As soon as the war and post-war boom ended, the Textile Capitalists in cotton as well as in jute—began to work out and put into practice their rationalisation plans. More looms per weaver, more spindle-frames per spinner and a cut in the Dear Food allowances....(the Dear Food allowance has completely Vanished in Bombay) these were the main points of the Rationalisation programme of textile capitalists. The great struggles of 1927-32 were directed against this offensive of rationalisation.

### Rationalisation Drive

The progress of rationalisation in the jute industry of Bengal can be clearly seen from the figures of workers per loom. From 1901-02 to 1929 the number of looms increased rapidly, but the number of workers per loom remained almost constant, being about 7 workers per loom, from 1929 to 1933 we have a slow rise of the number of looms but the total number of workers falls more rapidly. The result is that the number of workers per loom falls to 5 in 1933 and to 4 in 1935\*. During the five years between 1929 and 1934, one lakh and 30 thousand workers (1,30,000) have been thrown out of the jute mill industry. The Royal Commission on Labour gave the total number of workers employed in the jute mill industry as 3,47,000 for the year 1929. The "statistics of factories" "published by the Government of India" gives the figures 2,63,739 as the total number of jute workers in 1934. The difference between the two is about one lakh and thirty thousand, who have been thrown out of work.

Those who remained, had to face "speed up" and more work. Not only had the weaver to mind more looms and the spinners more spindle frames but he had also to work faster as well. The machines were now made to move faster. Some idea of what rationalisation in the jute industry meant can be obtained from the following figures:

| Year | Number of Looms Working | The total Production of Indian Jute Mills (Yardage of both sacking and Hessians) |
|------|-------------------------|--|
| 1931 | 57,357                  | 2,122,000,000†   |
| 1936 | 64,872                  | 3,500,000,000  |

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\* These figures of the number of workers per loom are obtained by dividing the total number of workers employed in the jute mills by the total number of looms worked.

† This figure does not contain the production of Non-Association Mills but the difference would hardly amount to 3% of the figure.

While the number of looms have grown only by 13%, the production in yardage has grown by 65%. This tremendous rise in the productive capacity of the machinery may be partly due to the rise in the working hours and to the working of night-shifts by certain mills and also to some minor improvements in the machinery. But the bulk of the rise in the efficiency undoubtedly comes from the 'speed-up' and from the intensification of labour. It is achieved through the ruthless sweating of workers.

### **Profits Maintained in spite of Depression**

What was the purpose of this Rationalisation drive—this speed up—this sweating? Let a jute capitalist himself speak. Sir Alexander Murray the chairman of the directors of the Samnagore Jute Factory Company Ltd. speaking at the 64th Annual General Meeting of the company on the 13th March 1937 said: "As you are aware, the members of the Indian Jute Mills Association, for a great many years, have regulated supply to demand, and *when the world-wide depression set in they were able to maintain a reasonable margin of profits*" (italics ours). Of course the profits were not maintained by the mysterious process of "regulating supply to demand", but by the simple trick of cutting down the costs of production—in other words—by throwing out a lakh of workers and getting more work done from those who remained. It is absurd to suggest that profits were maintained by merely regulating supply—i.e., by "sealing" looms and by going over to short-time work. It is quite clear that when the production for a given plant decreases, the cost of production rises—and the rate of profit calculated on the whole of the capital sunk in the plant falls. The trick of maintaining profits was not done by the mere "sealing" of looms or by going over to 40-hour week. It was done by Rationalisation and wage-cut.

The wage-cut which was imposed upon the workers in the years of depression amounted from 25% to 30% in the case of spinners and weavers. In the case of coolie and unskilled labour it amounted to almost 50%. The weekly wages of the spinners in 1928-29 were 6 to 7 Rs. In 1935-36 they were 5 to 6. The weavers weekly wage fell from 10-12 Rs. to 7-9 Rs. in the same

period. The coolie's wage on the other hand fell from 7 to 8 Rs. per week to 2-4 Rs. only. During this period the cost of living fell which to a certain extent counteracted the effect of falling wages but in the case of the coolie the real wage fell considerably lower during these years.

### **The 'Rearmament' Boom**

The turning point of the world depression was already discernible towards the beginning of 1934. The character of this 'recovery' and its relation with the armament rise was pointed out in a resolution of the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) held at that time. Indian jute industry, as we pointed out before, was the first to feel its effects in India. Already in 1935 it became difficult—for the Indian Jute Mills Association to maintain intact its agreement with the "outside" mills regarding the restriction of output. Everyone of these mills and especially the smaller ones wanted to take the fullest advantage of the expanding market. Short-time agreements could no longer be maintained and were terminated towards the beginning of 1936.

Since the 1st of April 1936, the Association Mills, which together represent 93 percent of the total jute looms in India, have gradually increased production. Just before the recent strike, all the 56,872 looms in these mills were running 54 hours per week which is the maximum number of hours per week allowed by the Indian Factories Act (1934). According to the statistics given by Sir Alexander, the production of jute manufactures has increased in the following manner:

| Year | The Total Production<br>of Jute Manufactures |      |
|------|--|------|
| 1934 | 932,000                                      | Tons |
| 1935 | 991,000                                      | ..   |
| 1936 | 1,183,003                                    | ..   |

This increased output is being absorbed by the world market, to the satisfaction of Sir Alexander Murray. The prices for Jute



manufactures even before the Strike were higher than those in 1931! The chief reason for this increased demand says Sir Alexandar, "is undoubtedly to be found in the rising volume of the world trade and the consequent demand for packing and wrapping materials....". It is quite clear that the Jute industry which "maintained" its profits in spite of the world depression is now once again on the way to increase them.

### **The Workers' Offensive**

Better trade prospects and the rise of production did not merely mean more employment for workers. During 1935 itself the number of workers in Jute mills rose by 14,247 (Govt. of India Statistics). The figures for the increase in 1936 are not to hand. The Jute capitalists wanted to get more work for the same wages. The working hours increased from 40 to 54; but the wages of those who were paid on a fixed wage basis remained unaltered. There was a speed-up in certain departments and the piece-rates of the weavers were tampered with. It was against this new system of wages and working hours, which was introduced by some Jute mills in April 1936 that the new offensive of the workers was launched. On the 9th of April 1936, the spinners and weavers of the Hukum Chand Mills refused to accept their reduced wages and downed tools. The managers tried to intimidate the workers by closing the mill-gates and preventing them from going out. The infuriated workers cut the telephone wires and rushed to the Mill-gates. There was a clash in which Mill darwan was injured seriously. This clash and the strikes which followed were the precursors of the present general strike. The present workers' offensive which is for a wage increase, for the stopping of bribery, against speed-up and extra work, began almost a year ago.

The Hukum Chand Mill strike involved 16,000 men. It was followed by strikes in the 4 Anglo-Indian Mills in Jagatdal involving 15,000. The Nuddea Mills in Naihati with 3,000 workers was also affected. In May the Hoogly Jute Mills were affected. One thousand five hundred weavers who were on strike were asked to vacate the coolie lines (Mill workers' quarters owned and

rented out by the Millowners). There was a violent clash and two mill officers were seriously injured. All these strikes were for the full-rate payment when the working hours were changed from 40 to 54. The Millowners maintained that they were paying increased wages in proportion to the increase in the working hours—as they again stated in their recent statement during the strike. This is only true in the case of the piece-rate workers but even here it is not universally true as in certain cases the piece-rates themselves have been reduced. The cut of an anna in the rupee which was imposed in 1932, when short-hours were introduced and which affected the fixed-wage workers was not withdrawn.

These individual strikes of 1936 were the precursors of the general strikes of 1937; just as the individual strikes of 1932-33 in the Bombay textile industry were the fore-runners of the general textile strike of 1934. The capitalists, when they want to introduce a new system of increased hours or reduced wages, do not do so simultaneously in all the mills for fear of organised general resistance from the workers. The usual trick followed by them is that the system is introduced first in a few mills one after another and the resistance of the workers therein is met and broken mill by mill. In this way the owners hope to avoid a general resistance—a general strike. This was how the Bombay millowners introduced the 20% wage-cut against which there were a series of individual strikes in 1933, culminating in the general strike of 1934. In this sense, the workers offensive in the jute industry which culminated in the general strike of 1937 began to assume form and magnitude in April 1936.

### **Workers' Organisation and Preparation for the Strike**

Workers' organisation has always been weak in the jute industry of Bengal. The first serious efforts at building up class trade unions of the jute workers were made between 1928-30 when the All-Bengal Jute Workers' Union was formed. It arose out of the struggle of the jute workers which preceded the general strike of 1929. After the arrests in connection with the Meerut Case, the union received a setback. The organisation had no basis in the factory. Its influence among the workers was based on the

successful agitation carried on by the leaders. No trained working class cadre had arisen. After the defeat of the strike of 1929 the organisation was as good as wiped out.

Several paper unions in different jute mill areas continued to exist. Some of these were controlled by reactionaries and the agents of the mill-owners. In 1934 under the influence of the textile general strike, an effort was made by the Red Trade Union Congress to revive the All-Bengal Jute Workers' Union. But before anything was achieved this Union was declared illegal by the government along with several other unions in the country which were considered to be under the influence of the Communists.

The merging of the Red Trade Union Congress with the AITUC, should have undoubtedly created favourable conditions for creating a unified organisation of the jute workers. The desire for struggle and unity was also once again rising as was evident from the strikes which started in April 1936. Nothing, however, was done by the trade unionists. In August 1936, BPTUC appointed a sub-committee for the organisation of jute workers and the calling of a Jute Workers' Conference, but none of the Trade Union Groups including the militants did anything to implement this resolution. There was neither any organisation nor a conscious preparation for the struggle which was ahead and the signs of which were clearly visible. The seething discontent which began against the new system of working hours and wages in April 1936 expressed itself in spontaneous strikes in the individual mills. The spontaneous actions of the workers continued throughout the last year until they culminated in the Howrah strike of February 1937 which marked the beginning of the general strike wave.

The jute workers moved forward to action to struggle. They achieved unity on local scale and threw up spontaneous terms of organisations for their individual struggles. The 'leadership' lagged behind. It was not able to feel the pulse of the rising tempo of the struggle. At times it acted as a brake on the initiative of the masses. At best it trailed behind the rapidly moving events. This has been the dominating feature in the jute workers' struggles of

1937. Why was it so? What is the cause of this disparity between the spontaneous actions of the masses and the leadership? Is it due to the want of unity among the Trade Union Groups? Is it due to the peculiar difficulties of organising the jute workers of Bengal—the wide expanse of the jute mill area—its distance from Calcutta—and the different languages spoken by the different sections of workers? These difficulties undoubtedly exist, but by themselves they are not sufficient to explain the situation. Organisation and the unity of the workers has to be achieved in spite of these difficulties. The question remains as to why we failed to overcome these difficulties?

### **The Real Reason**

The real reason, we believe, is far more fundamental. Our approach to the workers is still that of an alien class. We carry on our trade union activities in much the same way as the reformists. We are apart and away from the working class—struggle from the daily struggle of the workers in the mills—their desires and their aspirations. Our conception of the Trade Union organisation itself is formal. A mass paying membership and a union office is our conception of a union. Our TU work is mostly of an agitational character, restricted to sporadic meetings. And on the basis of this conception and work we readily come to the conclusion that mass unions are not possible in India under the conditions of repression.

Of course, the conditions of repression which obtain in India are terrible and the repression which the jute workers of Bengal have to face is far more ruthless and brutal than in any other industrial centre. Apart from the governmental and police terrorism which is common to all the labour centres, the jute workers have to face the terrorisation of the gundas and the Darwans of the jute bosses which is organised on a permanent basis.

Organisation has to be built up to fight this repression in spite of it. This task requires mass work and militant leadership. The centre of our Trade Union work must be shifted to the mill and to the department. Our Trade Union cadres must be at the spot, must participate and lead in every partial struggle against the day-to-day oppressions and what is important—*interpret to the*

*workers the wider meaning of each struggle.* On the basis of such struggle, department and mill committees must be built up not merely as organs of local struggle but as units, as parts of the wider unity of the jute workers as a whole, of the centralised Jute Workers' Union.

This type of day-to-day work among the jute workers was done by no trade union groups before the strike. That is why, they were all isolated from the masses. That is why no advanced working class cadres were created. That was the real cause of the disparity between the spontaneous action of the masses and the lack of conscious organisational preparation for the struggle. That such type of mass work is possible among the jute workers, that it does lead to success is already being demonstrated today in certain areas in Barrackpore and in Rajganj by a valiant band of workers. We shall revert to this point later. The point we want to make clear is that the lack of organisation or preparation, the failure of the leadership to keep pace with the masses—was due to their lack of contact with the masses, to their failure to work among the workers—to carry their trade union activities into the factory and inside the departments.

### **Election Propaganda**

From April 1936, (when the discontent against the new system of working hours and wages began) to February 1937 when the first series of strikes, which culminated in the general strike, started, there was no conscious preparation. But towards the end of this period an event intervened which brought all the trade union groups together for a campaign of intensive agitation. This event was the election for the Bengal Legislative Assembly under the new Constitution. There were three seats in the Jute Labour area one for each of the three big sections viz: Barrackpore, Hoogly-Serampore and Howrah-Budge Budge. There was no Trade Union Constituency. The members were to be elected by the direct vote of the workers who were eligible for the vote under the rules.

The trade union groups belonging to the AITUC formed a United Front Parliamentary Board and put up their three

candidates for the three seats. They contested the elections on the basis of the manifesto and the general workers demands formulated by the AITUC. The specific demands put forward before the workers during the election campaign were (1) Job, (2) Minimum salary of Rs 30/-p.m., (3) Free quarters, (4) Provision for old age (provident fund and gratuity), (5) Leave with pay for a month and one month's sick leave yearly, (6) Free Medical help, (7) Unemployment Relief, (8) Dole during unemployment, (9) Work for relatives, and (10) Free education for the children of the labourers.

The Election Campaign came at an opportune moment. It came against the background of a rising wave of discontent against the new working hours and the relatively reduced wages. It came at a time when the workers had already begun their offensive for the betterment of their conditions. Sporadic strikes were already taking place and the tempo of the struggle was rising. The wonderful opportunity of the election campaign could have been used far more effectively to make up for the lost time, to consciously mobilise the workers for the coming struggle.

The immediate demands—on the basis of which the strikes of April and May had taken place—and which were rapidly becoming the demands of struggle of all the jute workers—could have been placed in the forefront of the election propaganda. The election campaign could have been one continued effort for mobilising the jute workers *for struggle* against the long hours and reduced wages—against the hated bribery, corruption and the oppression of the Sardars (Jobbers) and for the recognition of the union. Workers were already fighting for these demands, which later became the main demands of the general strike. Not through the legislatures—not through the Slave Constitution—but by their own organised and united efforts—through struggle against the millowners and the government could their demands be obtained. This ought to have been the central theme of the election propaganda.

The election propaganda among the jute workers in Bengal seldom reached this high level. The campaign was not consciously used for the preparation of the coming struggle. In some places it

ever degenerated to the reformist level—‘Send us to Assembly and we will see to it that all your demands are granted’. But given the background of seething discontent, the widespread popularisation of the basic demands, the general propaganda for working class solidarity and unity had a tremendous galvanising effect. The workers interpreted the campaign instinctively as a call to united struggle for their immediate demands. Immediately after the elections spontaneous strikes started at Shibpore (Howrah).

### III

#### **The First Stage of the Strike**

We have seen that since April 1936, the jute bosses were rapidly forcing the pace of production. The market was expanding, the prices rising and everyone of the capitalists wanted to press forward to take the first advantage of the boom. It was not enough to unseal all the looms and go over to full time working. It was necessary to speed up production without employing more men. Profits cannot be made without cutting costs; and costs can be cut by getting more work per man during the working hours. The pace of production can rapidly be forced up, without increasing the number of workers in the same proportion, only by forcing more work on to the shoulders of the workers, by making inroads into their recess hour, by demanding extra punctuality of attendance (which in Indian means turning up  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour earlier than the scheduled time). This was exactly what was happening in the jute mills since April 1936.

In December 1936 there was a strike in the Hoogly Jute Mills at Rishra, because the weavers refused to do the additional work of repairing damaged gunnies themselves as was demanded of them. Similarly the immediate cause of the strike in the Fort William Jute Mills which began on 1st of February '37 was due to “the restrictions imposed upon the operatives regarding their attendance on duty.” This was the spark which ignited the flame of the Howrah strikes (Feb. 1 to Feb. 26th) which form the first stage of the general strike wave. Five thousand men were involved in the Fort William Mill strike. On the same day a meeting was

held, comrade Shibnath Banerjee presiding, in which the demands of the strikers were formulated. These included together with general demands, (1) The restoration of cuts in rates introduced in 1932 as mills were working now 54 hours, and (2) recognition of Jute Mill Worker's Union.

The strike in the Fort William Mill started spontaneously and it spread spontaneously to the two neighbouring mills with amazing rapidity. By the 4th of February the workers of the two adjoining mills came out in sympathy. The number of strikers swelled to 25,000. Shibnath Banerjee, Deben Sen and others took the lead in organising meetings and demonstrations of strikers. The enthusiasm of the workers for struggle and unity was very great. The strike spread rapidly to the workers in other industries in the area. Municipal Sweepers of Howrah struck work on the 1st week of February although their strike was short-lived. Workers of the rubber factory were the next to be affected. Among the jute workers themselves there was a growing support for the extension of the strike to a general strike.

During the first three weeks the strike showed not the slightest signs of weakening. The millowners sensed from the tempo of the struggle that the strike was going to spread out rapidly. The Howrah strikes had to be localised and crushed at all costs. The mill owners tried a double game. On the one hand they tried on the 23rd February to run the Howrah Jute Mill with a band of blacklegs and Sardars. On the other hand they made the show as if they were willing to negotiate a settlement with the workers and their leaders through the District Magistrate. The attempt of the blacklegs to run the Howrah Mill was defeated by the mass of strikers who launched an attack on the mill. Out of the ensuing clash the strikers came out victorious and the mill had to be closed.

While the workers were heroically asserting their democratic right to strike, the leaders of the strike were negotiating with the District Magistrate and millowners. Of course nothing was achieved in those negotiations of 23rd February "but the very report that such an attempt was being made under the lead of the District Magistrate produced a sobering effect on the recalcitrant



elements" (U. P. Message d. 23.2.37). This is exactly what the millowners wanted !

But the news of the mass resistance on the 23rd February travelled faster than the "sobering" news about the negotiations. On the 24th February 3,000 men of Budge Budge mill, on the other side of the Ganges, downed tools on the dismissal of four men of the weaving department. Adamjee Jute Mills also struck work. On the 25th there was a strike in the Shalimar Iron Works. The strike was already spreading to the Budge Budge area. Police and military had already appeared on the scene since the first skirmish of the 23rd. Section 144 was promulgated within the jurisdiction of Howrah and Bally municipalities and the Budge Budge police station. Entry of about a dozen leaders into Budge Budge was banned.

It was under the menace of the spreading strike that the millowners gave a verbal assurance to the strike leaders in the presence of the District Magistrate about certain of the strikers demands. This assurance was with reference to the following demands (1) Appointment and dismissal to be made by the manager or assistant manager, (2) Abuse and assaults on workers to be stopped, (3) Stopping of bribery, (4) Recognition of a Registered Union, (5) Six weeks maternity leave with pay, and (6) No victimisation. That the workers and their leaders were being tricked into breaking their own strike was clear the very next day. On the 26th February a representative of the millowners said in his interview to the correspondent of the "*Times of India*", that "the cessation of the strike did not hinge upon the question of the demands being conceded". The representative refers to the points agreed to as "a face-saving set of requests". It was quite clear that the main demands about wage-cut and the increase of work were not conceded and even the points agreed to verbally by the millowners were not going to be put into practice.

The workers of the four jute mills in Sibpore (Howrah) and Belur rejoined work on the 26th February. They themselves gained nothing, but the conflagration they had started was already fast spreading. Strike in the Budge Budge mill was followed by strike in Gogal Bhai on the other side of the Ganges. On the first

of March, five more jute mills in the Budge Budge area came out in sympathy with the strikers of the Budge Budge Mill. By the 10th of March— i.e., within 15 days after the strikes first began in Budge Budge, over 50,000 workers were on strike, in another two days (by the 12th) all the mills south of Calcutta on both the sides of the Ganges, with the exception of Fort Gloster North and Birla Mills, had to close down, 75,000 jute workers were on strike.

### **Strike Spreads To Budge Budge**

Section 144 followed close on the heels of the spreading strike. It was promulgated in area after area, prohibiting the assemblage of more than five persons, holding of meetings in public places and carrying of lathis and other weapons. Orders were served on several Labour leaders banning their entry into the strike areas. The whole strike area was guarded by police pickets. Any person looking like an agitator was caught and beaten up. There occurred the typical case of a journalist, who went to the strike area to get his report and make an enquiry into the conditions, who was beaten up. When he protested he was sent up for trial under Secs. 144 and 153.

### **Is It To Be A General Strike ?**

As soon as Howrah strikes began, the question arose—is it going to be the general strike? The Trade Union leaders who were conducting the individual strikes were of the opinion that the situation was ripe for a general strike and demanded that efforts be immediately made to spread the strikes to a general strike. They were for an immediate declaration of general strike by the BPTUC. The other Trade Union groups which consisted of Marxists, were opposed to the immediate spreading of these strikes. This group wanted “thorough preparations” before a general strike could be launched. They therefore proposed the formation of a sub-committee to prepare for a general strike by calling a Jute Workers’ Conference with representatives from each mill—by the formation of a strike committee and the

establishment of a strike fund. The position of the Marxists was that they too realised the necessity of a general strike in the near future but they wanted proper preparations—organisations of the strike committees etc. beforehand.

This was the state of the controversy in the beginning of February when the Howrah strikes started. Those who were the loudest in declaring for an immediate general strike did very little themselves to spread it. The spread of the strike in Howrah and from Howrah to Budge Budge was quite spontaneous and was due to the initiative and the desire for unity and struggle of the workers themselves. Those who claimed to be the leaders of a movement for a general strike and who denounced others as saboteurs, did nothing to popularise the slogan of general strike during the first stage of the strike. On the other hand they were creating from the very start the illusion among the Howrah strikers that their strike could be settled as *an individual* strike. Subsequent events—as we have shown above—proved that it was an illusion. If they were really serious about the general strike, why could they not have agreed to the proposal of the Marxists to start immediate preparations for a general strike? Even general propaganda about the necessity of a general strike would have had the desired effect of spreading the existing strikes. If they were really serious about the general strike, why could they not have taken up the proposal of the Marxists for the immediate calling of a Jute Workers' Conference and agree to get the issue of the general strike settled by the workers themselves?

### **The Controversy Over General Strike**

The essence of the controversy, appears to us to be the fact that both the groups were more or less isolated from the masses of workers and were unable to feel the pulse of the rising tempo of the struggle. Those who were clamorous with the demand for an immediate general strike, merely wanted the BPTUC to pass a resolution to that effect. Some of them at any rate wanted this to serve their opportunist ends. *In practice* they were the real saboteurs of the strike. The Marxists on the other hand, entirely underestimated the tempo of the rising struggle. Their position in

February was "to end the strikes in Howrah as happily as possible" and to settle down to prepare for a general strike. The events of the subsequent weeks showed how they had underestimated the strength of the spontaneous strike movement. There was no question now of ending any individual strikes "happily" at all. The sequel of Howrah had proved it. The only way of happily ending the strike was to give conscious direction and lead to the spontaneous strike movement and to rapidly spread it to a general strike. There was no other way.

In the second week of March, under the stress of the rising strike wave in Budge Budge, the Marxists shifted their position. They were now for consolidating the existing strike and for popularising the slogan of general strike. They put forward a lengthy programme of "preparation for the general strike"; but they were not yet for spreading the strike to a general strike. They said "the demand for a General Strike has not yet assumed the character of a demand arising out of the mass of workers themselves". This they said on the 11th of March when the strike was rapidly spreading in Budge Budge-Rajganj, Sankrail, Chengail and Rishra. By the 13th of March 75,000 workers were already on Strike. And the workers were well on the way of realising a general strike in action. If the Marxists had at least begun to carry out in practice their programme they would have found themselves spreading the strikes to a general strike in spite of themselves. The situation was so tense.

We can sum up our views on the controversy in the following manner. The Trade Union groups which claimed from the start to be for spreading the Howrah strikes to a general strike failed to do so *in practice*. They *did not form* strike committees of rank and file workers where they were leading the strikes. They did not carry on a propaganda for spreading the Howrah strikes into a general strike in the neighbouring areas. The strike spread to Budge Budge spontaneously. They did not agree to the proposal of the Labour Party-Ganashakti groups to form a joint strike committee to consolidate the existing strikes and start propaganda for general strikes in the other areas. This delay in achieving

united action by all leading groups was harmful to the development of the struggle.

On the other hand, the Labour Party and Ganashakti groups, even taking for granted that they could not foresee that the Howrah and Budge Budge strikes would develop into a general strike, ought to have at least acted upon their own resolution. They ought to have popularised *the need* for a general strike in areas in which they had contacts. They ought to have explained to the workers in other areas the significance of the strikes which were taking place in Howrah and Budge Budge. They ought to have explained to the workers how the strikers were fighting for exactly the same demands which were their demands and against oppressions which they too had to face instead of their continuous harping on the need for preparation for a general strike. Their failure to do anything substantial themselves while the strike was on, made them appear as the opponents of the slogan of general strike. This attitude of the leaders of this group spread confusion among their own active rank and file, who, working and living among the masses felt the tempo of the rising struggle.

#### IV

### **The Second Phase of the Strike**

The spreading of the strike to Budge Budge area formed the second phase of the strike. As stated previously the strikes in Budge Budge followed close on the heels of the Howrah strikes. Within less than three weeks i. e., by the 16th of March all the mills, south of Calcutta except the Fort Gloster North and the Birla Mills had to close down. The number of strikers involved were 80,000. Workers of Hastings Mill in Rishra (Serampore) had also struck work. We have already described the repressive measures launched by the government. In spite of Section 144, inspite of police terror, mass clashes of strikers with the police were taking place especially at the gates of the few mills which were still working (Adamjee, Fort Gloster North and Birla) in this area. On the 12th of March there was a clash near the gates of the Adamjee Mill. The police resorted to a lathi charge to disperse the picketers and one arrest was made. On the 19th there was a clash

near the Fort Gloster (North) Mill; several arrests were made. About the same time there was a clash near Shyamganj (Birla Mills). Several workers were severely injured by lathi blows.

### **Delhi Meeting of the A. I. T. U. C. Executive**

The Jute strike had now gained formidable proportions. The heroic stand of the workers, the miserable conditions of work and wages against which they were rebelling and the brutal repression which was being exercised against them attracted widespread attention throughout India. Workers meetings were being held outside the banned areas protesting against the use of Section 144, the arrests and the prohibiting orders on leaders. The President of the National Congress, issued a statement calling on the public to help the cause of the jute workers. On the 13th of March Prof . Ranga tabled an adjournment motion in the Central Assembly "On the failure of the Government of India to take effective steps to settle the strike". The motion was, of course, disallowed.

In Delhi, during the convention week the EC of the AITUC held its meeting. The question of the jute mill strike was discussed. The leaders of the Labour Party and Ganashakti groups attempted once again to defend their untenable stand. A resolution drafted by comrades Dange, Nimbkar and Karnik was finally passed. The resolution recognised the fact that "the strike of the jute workers of Howrah and Budge Budge was rapidly spreading" and that "the occasion was ripe for a general strike among the jute workers of Bengal". It called upon all the local unions and Trade Union Workers to unite and to develop the situation into a general strike as early as possible and to form a democratically elected Central Strike Committee with rank and file representatives from the mills. It formulated the basic demands of the workers which included the restoration of the wage-cut effected in 1932, the stopping of bribery, fine, and assaults, and also demanded the permanent service, and recognition of the union. This resolution was passed on the 21st of March 1937.

## **Jute Workers' Conference**

In the meanwhile, the trade union leaders who were conducting the strike in Budge Budge formed the Reception Committee of the All-Bengal Jute Workers' Conference on the 18th March and announced the Conference itself for the 28th. There was very little time to popularise the purpose of the Conference among the workers—especially in the area to which the strike had not yet spread. It was necessary to popularise the Conference as the initiator of the unity of all the jute workers in their struggle against their common oppressors. The Conference was going to discuss and decide the question of the utmost importance to all the jute workers and it was essential to secure the participation of the delegates from all the areas. The question of the Conference was before the BPTUC for months; but this group had persistently refused to take up the question of calling the Conference at an early date. The Labour Party and Ganashakti groups on the other hand instead of putting forward a sterile opposition on the slogan of general strike, ought to have pressed forward the issue of the Conference, ought to have insisted that the question of general strike be decided by the workers' Conference and ought to have themselves taken the lead in preparing for the Conference.

As matters stood, however, little propaganda for the Conference outside Budge Budge was done. Leaflets explaining the purpose of the conference were not widely distributed. The Labour Party and Ganashakti groups did little to co-operate in the preparations for the Conference. The Conference was attended by about 10,000 strikers from the Budge Budge area. The leaders of all the T. U. groups participated. Mr. J. C. Gupta, the Congress whip in the Bengal Assembly presided over the conference. Comrades Dange, Nimbkar and Karnik—leaders of the Bombay GKU—participated in the conference as the delegates of the AITUC. Comrade Sudin Pramanik in his reception address sketched the economic background of the jute workers' struggle showing how the tremendous profits of the jute bosses were made at the cost of the exploitation of the workers and how their demands were justified. Comrade Dange and Dutt-Mazumdar stressed in their speeches the need for the formation of rank and

file strike committees in the labour localities and in the mills as the organs of struggle. Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose expressed on behalf of the Congress its 'sympathy and support' to the cause of the workers. Sibnath Banerjee moved the resolution calling upon the workers to extend the strikes into a general strike and putting forward the fifteen demands of the strikers.

### **Central Strike Committee**

The names of the Central Strike Committee were announced at the conference, in which leaders of all the TU groups were included. It was also decided to include two representatives of each mill on strike. But the meaning of these steps was not explained to the workers. It was not explained that in the formation of the Central Strike Committee a formal unity among all the union leaders working in the different jute areas was achieved. This formal unity was to be converted into the real unity of the masses of the jute workers themselves. The Central Strike Committee would become the symbol and the organ of such a unity only when it would be reinforced by the inclusion of the rank and file representatives from the various mills in the different areas. Then alone it would be the workers' own organ of struggle. And out of such an organ of united struggle—forged in the process of strike struggle would arise the central organisation of the jute workers, the United Trade Union of all the jute workers of Bengal. It was not explained that the Central Strike Committee would be linked up through the rank and file representatives into the local strike committees in the various mills and that these local strike committees would be the leading organs of the strike in the various mill areas. Out of these strike committees, in so far as they succeeded in mobilising the support of the majority of the workers in the mill—in becoming their trusted leaders in the struggle, could arise the mill and the department committees which would be the real and the live basis of a centralised and a united union of the jute workers.

This perspective was not placed before the workers. It was possibly not before the leaders themselves. That this perspective was the logical development of the struggle has been proved by



subsequent events. In Barrackpore where the Marxists took the initiative in forming local strike committees of rank and file workers, committees which took the leadership in the mass struggle against the strike breakers, influential mill and department committees enjoying the confidence and support of the masses of workers arose. If from the very start functioning rank and file strike committees had been formed in each locality and mill and if these committees had been the leaders in the struggle and if these committees had been linked up with the Central Strike Committee, we would have been nearer the formation of a powerful centralised union than we are today. We would be far more effectively fighting and check-mating the breaches of the agreement arrived at the time of calling off the strike, which are being committed to-day.

In practice the Central Strike Committee functioned as a top committee at best or did not function as a committee at all. No real local strike committees were formed except in Barrackpore. Workers' representatives attended only the last two meetings when final negotiations were going on. The Central Strike Committee never became an organ of the rank and file working class leadership—the popular and central organ of workers' struggle as was the case with the Joint Strike Committee of the Bombay Textile Workers' in 1934.

## V

### **The Third Phase of The Strike**

The situation of the strike on the eve of the Jute Workers' Conference i. e. on the 28th March was that the strikers in the Budge Budge area and on the other side of the Ganges in Bauria, Chengail, Sankrail and Rajganj were still on. But already determined efforts to break the strikes had begun. At Shyamganj the Birla Mills had struck work for a few days but the strike had collapsed there. In Howrah (Sibpur) three mills were working. In Ghusuri, there was again a short-lived strike in Adamjee mill, but the five other small mills in the area were unaffected. The big jute mill areas in the North, the Hoogly-Serampore area on the one

side and the Barrackpore area on the other, were, as yet totally untouched. The immediate tasks before the Strike Committee should have been to strengthen the strikes in the southern areas, form strike committees in each of the mills, counteract the strike breaking efforts of the agents of the millowners and the police by organising the defensive action of the workers, and keep up the enthusiasm of the workers by issuing forceful leaflets condemning the repressive policy of the new ministry. It was necessary immediately to start a hurricane propaganda in the Barrackpur and Hoogly areas and bring about strikes in all the mills there before the strike in the South began to weaken. If this rapid movement could have been achieved, if the strikes in Barrackpur and Hoogly area could have come two weeks earlier than they actually began, then the power of the general strike would have been greater. A more favourable settlement could have been won with the same amount, perhaps less, of sacrifice.

The actual development however was otherwise. On the eve of the Budge Budge conference, the police commissioner of Calcutta issued orders prohibiting all important labour leaders from participating in the Anti-Constitution Hartal Day on the 1st of April. Meetings, processions, etc. were banned within Calcutta and the suburbs for a period of 7 days. This was partly responsible for delaying the efforts to spread the strike to the northern areas. Immediately after the declaration of the general strike orders were served on Dutt-Mazumdar (Assembly member for Barrackpore Labour Constituency) and others prohibiting them from entering that area. There was no organisation, nor any local trade union cadres working in Barrackpore area who could take up strike propaganda on their own hands. It was not until the 13th April that strikes in Barrackpur started and by the time they began to spread rapidly, the situation in the South had begun to weaken.

As soon as the ban orders issued in connection with the inauguration of the New Constitution had lapsed the Central Committee organised a huge workers' demonstration and a meeting at the foot of the Ochterlony Monument (Maidan) and

decided to take a workers' procession to Mr. Fazlul Huq who had now become the Prime Minister of "the new regime". On the 16th of February, when the Howrah strike was on, Mr. Huq had presided over a meeting in Howrah Town Hall in which "a charter of workers' grievances" was proposed to be drawn up to be presented to the newly constituted legislatures. In that meeting the demands of the Howrah strikers were characterised as "extremely reasonable"—and the workers were congratulated on their brave stand. Now the same Mr. Fazlul Huq was the prime minister under the new constitution and the workers wanted to see what he would now do for them. The demonstration was not dispersed by a lathi charge. The minister graciously agreed to see the deputation of workers and their leaders. Negotiations and consultations continued for a few days and on the 13th the ministers communicated their decision. On behalf of the government the ministers "advised" the workers to call off the strike on the following assurance:-(1) No victimisation for TU activities, (2) An impartial Board of Conciliation to be appointed to investigate into the demands of the strikers and give effect to their recommendation within a fortnight.

This was clearly a strike-breaking proposal. The workers rightly demanded that the orders under Section 144 be immediately withdrawn and the main demands regarding wage-cut, permanency of service and recognition of their union be first granted before they returned to work. Negotiations broke down. The new government in the person of its Labour Minister started its open strike-breaking propaganda. Replying to an address presented to him by the "workers" of Adamji Jute Mills, the Hon. Mr. S. Suhrawardy said "the strike might have been useful in those days when there were no other methods of bringing your grievances to the notice of the authorities. Now that your grievances will be listened to with sympathy, there is no reason why you should follow this procedure". If in spite of his wholesome advice the workers did follow the procedure—

he—Suhrawardy—in company with the jute bosses had made up his mind how to deal with them.

### **Strike Spreads To Barrackpore**

In the meanwhile, discontent was growing in the Barrackpore area. A few organisers had slipped in, in spite of the strict vigilance and began agitation in the mills and the Bustecs. In Barrackpore the strike had to be spread against heavy odds. The area was already strongly policed. But the spontaneous mass initiative developed by the workers broke down the resistance of the police and the mill authorities. From the 12th April, began the victorious march of the strike in the Barrackpore area. Every advance made in Barrackpore had to be fought for. Strike started in Titagarh No.1 and No.2. On the 13th the strikers in a body marched to the Khardah Mill. The Bosses closed the gates of the Khardah Mill to prevent agitators from entering it. There were mass clashes with the police at the gates of mills. In spite of the lathi-charges by the police, the mass of strikers were able to rush into the mill and bring out the workers there on Strike. Similar clashes occurred in other places. By the 17th the Strike was complete in Titagarh No.1 and No.2 and in the Standard and Khardah mills.

On the 16th and 17th the strike spread to Anglo-Indian Mill No.4. The strikers launched an offensive against the other three mills in the area. Here the operations on behalf of the mill authorities were led by Mr. Latafat Hussein—the unsuccessful NFTU candidate in the last elections. With the aid of the mill durwans and the police he forced batches of workers inside the mill.

On the 18th April, Mr. Latafat Hussein organised a meeting of “workers” on behalf of his “Kankinara Labour Union”. The meeting was organised to give a reception to Hon. Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, the Labour Minister, who repeated his speech at the Adamjee Mill in Howrah—Workers had no need to strike. The new government was there to look after their comforts etc. As soon as the workers got back to work the government would “give

serious consideration to the suggestion of a new conciliation machinery”.

Commenting on this speech Mr. Shibnath Banerjee, the president of the AITUC said: “The Hon'ble Minister should have thrown his weight and dynamic personality for getting an immediate and just settlement. Is it too late to expect him to take a correct view”? (Amrita Bazar Patrika., 20.4.37).

But the “Sweet Words” of the minister had no effect on the workers as the police had their own way. Workers had no illusions about them. As if in reply to the minister the strike assumed higher dimensions. On the 19th of April there were already 50,000 on strike in Titagarh and 50,000 in Jagatdal and Kankinara. On the 20th the total number of strikers in the entire jute area was 1,25,000.

### **Weakening at Budge Budge**

While the strike wave was advancing with rapid strides in the Barrackpore area, concerted efforts were being made to break the strike in the southern areas, in Budge Budge, Rajganj and Sankrail. Here the strike had entered its 6th week. On the Budge Budge side meetings were still possible a few miles away from the mill area in Nungi and Maheshtola and several meetings were held condemning the strike-breaking speeches of Suhrawardy and the repression by government. On the other side, in Rajganj, Sankrail, Chengail and Bauria no meetings were possible nor were attempts made to hold meetings outside the banned area. There were no properly functioning strike committees in mills or Bustee committees. The spontaneous efforts of the strikers to fight the strike, breaking activities of the police and the mill authorities were not coordinated nor organised. There was a tremendous lack of leaflets. The leaflets of the strike committee were always tame—their language stood in sharp contrast to the heroic mass actions of the workers. Every leaflet of the strike committee ought to have given a broad survey of the strike situation on all fronts at the moment, ought to have interpreted the significance of the mass actions of the workers in their struggle against strike, breakers,

ought to have sharply attacked the repressive and the strike-breaking policy of the ministers under the new constitution. It ought to have exposed the hollow claim of the ministers that they were introducing a new regime when strikes were unnecessary. The new ministers were faithful to the jute bosses and to Imperialism—they were carrying out the same old policy of repression. The only way of keeping up the tempo of the strike struggle in spite of repression—in spite of Sec.144 and the imposing of bans on leaders, was through the functioning of local strike committees and bustee committees and by organising defence groups. These local organs of struggle in the entire fighting front had to be linked up. This could be done by leaflets alone—leaflets which transmit the enthusiasm of the struggle from one area to another, which breathe the spirit of solidarity and struggle, of the unity of all the jute workers against the jute bosses and their henchmen.

These failings—which were the weakness of the struggle as a whole, were especially responsible for the weakening at Budge Budge which was noticeable towards the close of the strike. The strategy of the police and the mill bosses was to concentrate attack on the weakening front. On the 20th of April the operation of the Section 144 was extended to Nungi and Maheshtola. A large police force was posted in the Budge Budge area alone. All the mills were guarded by armed guards. The picture was the same on the other side of the Ganges. Under this strong police protection, villages in which the strikers lived were raided and workers were forced to the mills to work. From many villages the Sardars mobilised batches of blacklegs mostly through coercion and marched them to the mills. The militant workers of Rajganj and Sankrail organised mass pressure upon these blackleg parties. There were frequent clashes. Although the mills in this area began sounding the whistle for starting work from the 20th April, the tactics of the strikers successfully prevented the mills from getting a real start.

On the 21st, a Police daroga with a batch of armed constables was taking a batch of 30 blacklegs from Halishar, a village near

Sankrail. He was met on the way by a batch of picketers who began to reason with the blacklegs not to go to work. A clash ensued in which the police fired on the strikers wounding two boys.

Sajjad Zaheer, the Secretary of the Progressive Writers' Association, who visited the scene of the firing the next day gives a grim picture of police repression in that area. All the surrounding villages were honey-combed with police. Sankrail was converted into an armed camp. Hundreds of armed and ordinary police were wandering in the villages and bustees. The wounded boys, (one was ten years old while the other was sixteen)—were arrested and instead of immediately being taken to the hospital they were temporarily bandaged and taken to the police thana where Mr. Zaheer saw them the next day! Even the 60 years old father of one of the boys was arrested! In spite of the police terror the strike-breaking campaign in that area received a setback and the mills Belvedere, National and Delta were again closed.

### **Strike Spreads To Hoogly**

From now on the events began to move with lightning rapidity. In Barrackpore subdivision, almost all the mills from Hukumchand to Khardah were on strike. Strike fever was spreading to the other industries in the area. There were already strikes in the paper mills at Hajinagore and Titagarh. On the other side of the Ganges in the Hoogly-Serampore area there was only one mill as yet on strike and that was the Hastings Mill at Rishra. On the 24th there was serious clash at the gates of the mill between the strikers and the blacklegs. Mr. Zaman, M.L.A. who was elected to the Bengal Assembly from the Jute Labour Constituency of Serampore was wounded in the lathi-charge and later arrested by the police. The police and the mill authorities made great efforts to prevent the spread of strike of this area. But after the Rishra clash mill after mill came out. By the 27th nine mills in this area closed down. The number of strikers in Hoogly alone swelled to 45,000. The total number of jute workers on strike was now 2,25,000.

### **The Highest Point of the Strike Wave**

The highest peak of the strike wave was reached in the last week of April. By the 30th April not only all the mills in the Barrackpore subdivision from Khardah to Hukumchand were out but on the Hoogly side all the mills except Bansheria were on strike. Strike had even spread to the Gondalpara mill in the French territory (Chandannagore). The other industrial concerns affected by the strike wave in this week were :— Kesoram Cotton Mill, Dunbar Cotton Mill, Indian Paper Pulp (Barrackpore), Jenson Paint Works, Kankinara Paper Mills, Britania Engineering Works and Palta Water Works. Even the sweepers of Jagatdal struck work for a few days in sympathy with the jute workers during this eventful week. In the southern area strike still continued in Budge Budge (two mills) Caledonia, Belvedere, National and Delta. The other mills were being run by insufficient blackleg labour, under the protection of police. The strikers had not given up the fight. Clashes were still continuing in Budge Budge. The highest number of jute workers on strikes must have touched the mark of 250,000 during this week.

### **Repression Runs Riot**

With the rising tempo of the strike, repression too reached unheard of limits. Orders under Section 144 were further extended. All Trade Union leaders were served with orders banning their entry into all the strike areas. Several were arrested. Hundreds of workers were being arrested daily. Searches and arrests were taking place in connection with the leaflets which were being distributed by the strike committee. In Budge Budge, Sankrail and Chengail a veritable reign of terror was established by the police force which was stationed there. In Barrackpore area, batches of police men with lathis were going to the workers' quarters, and forcing the strikers to go to work. Innumerable workers old and young were beaten till they could hardly walk. Only a few such cases have been reported in the newspapers. In its press statement published in the Ananda Bazar Patrika dated 1-5-37, the Central Strike Committee reported.: "On Tuesday the



27th April a police party entered the Bustee of the Angus Mill and attempted to force the workers to go to work. When they failed they began an indiscriminate flogging of the workers. Mansar—an eight years old boy was wounded in the head and bled profusely till he became unconscious. Ranjan Saha, an old man of 70 was severely wounded and is in bed." Four such cases are recorded in that press statement and many more have never been reported at all.

Side by side with open brutal repression, the agents of the jute bosses were pursuing the tactics of splitting provocation and communal riots. Latafat Hussein organised a bogus "conference of the workers" in Budge Budge and in Barrackpore and formulated trivial demands, which they made a show of placing before the mill authorities, and then spread rumours that the "workers" demands were granted in order to spread confusion among the workers. The millowners published about 20 to 30 leaflets within the two weeks of April and broadcasted the copies in tens of thousands. These leaflets contained abuse of the strike leaders, and strike-breaking propaganda. Mr. Suhrawardy was continuing his lectures to the workers condemning the strike. None of these had any serious effect on the strike.

In the last week of April, a wave of sympathy and support for the brave strikers arose from all over India. Workers' meetings were held in the various labour centres supporting the strike and resolving to collect funds for relief. The Bengal Congress Committee organised a public meeting in support of the strike and condemned the repression. A strike relief fund was started by the Congress. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a huge mass meeting in Albert Hall on the 3rd of May in support of the strike and helped to collect 1,000 rupees. Rabindranath Tagore issued a statement in support of the strikers. The students of Calcutta established a relief fund.

### **Jute Bosses Feel the Pinch**

By the 3rd and the 4th week of April the effect of the strike became perceptible on the jute mill industry. A report in

"*Statesman*" dated 23-4-37 said that "a cable received from New York by a local Jute Merchant suggests that Calcutta may lose considerable business to the continent if the strike continues much longer. The dispute has coincided with a period of exceptionally good demand for jute goods from all parts of the world.... It is feared that if the strike continues there will be a great shortage of jute goods and consumers will be driven to seek their requirements elsewhere". It is a fact that because of the strike the prices went up by 30 per cent. Temporarily, the speculators as well as the millowners made good profits. But that was only as long as stocks could last. On the 28th April, Messrs. Moram and Co. stated in the Jute Market report that "Business is gradually being brought to a stand-still by the further spread of mill strikes. Fully 6% of the looms in the Calcutta area are now idle and no interest in consequence is shown by the buyers—quotations are nominal in the absence of business" (*Statesman* 28-4-37).

The situation was getting critical for the millowners. If the strike continued much longer, it was going to mean a great loss. If they had to grant the demands of increased wages, it would mean that the advantage gained by the rise of prices would be nullified. In the meanwhile strong public opinion was mobilised in support of the demands of strikers. The Millowners' Association in their statement of 29-4-37 flatly denied that there was any wage-cut. They stated that they were paying for 54 hours in strict ratio to the wages paid for 40 hours. They put forward the plea that the workers were prosperous and happy and it was the Communist leaders who had engineered the strike for political ends and were continuing it by methods of terrorisation. The statement was meant for that section of the public which had "a stake in the country" and to whom alone the argument that the strike leaders were aiming at "the overthrow of the orderly government" would appeal. It could convince none else. It showed that the millowners wanted the government to take strong action against the leaders and help them to save their profits.

On the 30th April Mr. J. Reid Kay and Mr. H. H. Burn the president of the Millowners' Association went to Darjeeling and

had an interview with the Governor and the Ministers. What happened in this tripartite conference is not reported but it can be guessed. They saw that breaking the strike—when it had reached such vast proportions would be a difficult and a long process and would have a bad reaction. Besides it would be a blot on the new ministry. The millowners knew however that the conciliation they had in view was not going to cost them anything.

## VI

### **The Settlement & After**

As soon as the ministers descended from the Hills, the first thing they did was to issue long-winded statements defending themselves against the attacks which had been levelled against them by Congress and Labour leaders. The prime minister in his statement reproduced the millowners' arguments in his own words. "There has never been anything like a real economic basis for these strikes" declared Mr. Huq. "Now at any rate they are admittedly being used by Communist leaders to pave the way for a revolution in India". Attacking Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru he said that Nehru was doing the same thing but "only using guarded language to avoid the clutches of law." As for the demands of the strikers, Mr. Huq "never said anything at any time to anybody about the demands being just or unjust" (not even on Feb. 18 in the Town Hall meeting in Howrah?). The government could not "intervene in such strikes and force any party to accept any terms" and least of all the jute bosses who must have "justice and fairplay". As for the strikers, "public peace and tranquility" had to be maintained at all costs. Mr. Huq was ever willing for negotiations based "on a reasonable view of things" by which he meant the workers going back to work unconditionally. And now if the "well wishers of labour" instead of coming to him, the popular minister went to Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru—so much the worse for them. He would now pack up his things and "go back to Darjeeling and leave the unfortunates to the consequences of their suicidal conduct".

## **The Last Week of The General Strike**

These hysterics of Mr. Huq were only a part of his game to drive a hard bargain with the strikers and their leaders. He, of course, did not leave Calcutta. On the one hand he got in touch with the leaders of the strike committee and on the other intensified the repression, terror and provocation in the mill areas.

On the 29th the Police Commissioner issued orders banning all May Day demonstrations, processions etc. in all the three districts of 24 Parganas, Hoogly and Howrah. On the first of May another crop of prohibitory orders were issued against a great number of leaders. In the case of some of these orders, the fresh cause given was that the persons concerned were forming "Communist Cells" among the workers. The millowners with the aid of the police were concentrating their attack on three points Jagatdal in Barrackpore area, in Hoogly and in Budge Budge. Determined efforts were being made in these three places to get the mills to work. On the 3rd of May, 85 strikers were arrested in a single day—35 in Jagatdal and 50 in Hoogly where there were lathi-charges in an effort to run Shamnagore North Mill at Bhadreswar. In Budge Budge the Cheriot Mill had to close again as a result of a clash. On the 4th, whistle was sounded by Alliance, Meghna, Craig and Waverley in Barrackpore but a full contingent of workers was not obtained. A police officer with a batch of policemen entered all the bustees of the four Anglo Indian Mills, every room was searched for lathis and leaflets, the belongings of workers were thrown about, the doors broken open. On the same day the police entered the Bustees of Titagarh Mill no. 2. and arrested nine workers. On the 3rd of May Victoria Mill in Hoogly sounded the whistle. When the workers did not come, the manager with 50 policemen rushed into the coolie lines and wanted to evict the workers from their quarters. On their refusal they were assaulted and as a result two women were injured. The three mills of Rajganj had closed down after the Halishar firing. After a week, stoppage they started again but only to close again.

## **State of the Strike on the Eve of Settlement**

The situation of the strike on the eve of the settlement which took place on the night of the 7th of May may be summed up as follows. In Hajinagar several mills had sounded the whistle but failed to get any workers at all. In Jagatdal because of the ruthless terrorism of the police, several mills had begun to work though not with a full complement. In Reliance and Kankinara Mill partial work had begun. In Jagatdal the strike front had begun to shake. In Titagarh, on the other hand the strike was very strong. The millowners dared not attempt to open the mills. Here the millowners were distributing thousands of leaflets. A poster with a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi was posted up on the walls asking the workers to go back to work. None of these had any effect on the workers. In Hoogly only one mill was working. In Budge Budge, Lothian, Orient and Albion, had started work several days before but the workers came out again when they found that no demands had been granted. In brief, the situation was summed in a report in *Amrit Bazar Patrika* dated 7-5-37 as follows:— About 22 mills on the whole remained idle on 6.5.37 rendering 95,000 men idle. The situation towards the end of the last month of the strike was about 40 mills out and the number of operatives involved was over 2,000,000. The situation had no doubt deteriorated in the first week of May but not so much as shown by the figures. The figure of 95,000 is too low a figure and is arrived at by assuming that all the mills running were working with a full complement.

## **The Settlement**

It was against this background that the negotiations between the ministers and the strike leaders were taking place. On the one hand the strike front was visibly weakening and on the other hand the government were eager to end the tension by a show of conciliation without granting any of the demands. During the days of the negotiations, hundreds of workers' representatives were coming to the Calcutta office of the Central Strike Committee. Most of them were of opinion that the strike should be called off if

the government gave the assurance about stopping bribery and the beating by the Sardars, and if all were taken back to work and the repressive orders and prosecutions withdrawn. It was felt that it would be better to take this opportunity of ending the strike rather than face a breaking of the strike which would have meant a much greater demoralisation. The strike leadership had failed to build up a network of rank and file committees and defence groups to fight the strike-breakers in the face of repression. The only place where such an organisation functioned was Titagarh in Barrackpore and there the strike was still strong. There was no other way for the present but a retreat—and an avenue for retreat was offered which could if properly utilised, be made the basis of a greater advance—a strong and a united organisation and a better organised struggle.

These were the considerations which led to the settlement. The terms offered and accepted were (1) No victimisation of workers for taking part in the strike or trade union activities, (2) Workers' Trade Union to be recognised, (3) Liberal policy to be adopted regarding all cases arising out of the strike, (4) Thorough investigation satisfactory to the workers into the question of wages and the powers of Sardars and overseers in the matter of appointments and dismissals, which had given rise to grave abuses and into other grievances of the jute workers, (5) Prohibition orders under section 144 to be withdrawn. The Central Strike Committee discussed the negotiations in two meetings on the 5th and the 7th May respectively. On both the occasions 80 to 100 workers delegates from different parts were present. In the first meeting the Strike Committee formulated their demands for settlement. These were (1) No appointment or dismissal of workers through Jobbers, stopping bribery etc. (2) Necessity of restoring wage-cut to be accepted in principle—a token restoration to be immediately made and the full question to be left to a board of arbitration which was also to decide about the other demands, (3) The terms of settlement to be announced by the Government with the declared consent of the Millowners and the strikers and their organisation.

These additional demands were placed before the ministers who were of course not ready to accept them. On the 7th the strike committee met again and discussed the terms actually offered by the government and decided to accept them and to call off the strike on the 10th of May.

### **The Strike Called off**

On the 8th of May the statements of the premier as well as that of the Central Strike Committee calling off the strike appeared in the press and leaflets of these statements were distributed widely throughout the mill area. In Titagarh where the strike was very strong and where 14 mills were on strike these statements were greeted with mixed feelings. Crowds of militant workers rushed to the local strike committee office and wanted to know what the workers had after all gained by those terms. The Titagarh workers were dissatisfied with the terms of the settlement but they decided to wait till the next day when section 144 was expected to be withdrawn and the strike leaders were expected to come and hold meetings to explain the settlement.

Sunday the 9th of May was a busy day. There were meetings in every centre in the entire jute industry area. Strike leaders were rushing in batches from place to place and addressing series of meetings. Workers in their thousands waited in the meeting places in their centres. Even the Titagarh workers agreed to the tactic of withdrawing the strike when the situation was explained to them. They realised that they were retreating in agreeing to those terms but they also saw that the chain was no stronger than its weakest link. They were still strong in Titagarh but the front was weakening elsewhere. "They knew that they were retreating in order to preserve their fighting strength, to redouble it to utilise the rich experience of this struggle for building up a greater and mightier unity in the form of a single All-Bengal Jute Workers' Union".

### **The Aftermath**

The settlement was at best a moral victory for the workers. It created among the workers for the first time a sense of unity and

solidarity embracing the whole industry. It opened up the possibility of building up a centralised and a strong union. As for immediate material gains, there were none. Within four days after the work began the workers found that each one of the terms of settlement was broken. There was victimisation in every area. Comrade Shibnath Banerjee issued a statement on the 13th May in which he recorded numerous cases of victimisations from all areas. A few of the workers arrested in connection with the strike were released, but there were a great number of cases pending before the Courts. In many cases even bail was not granted. As for the demands about wage-cut—and the Sardar's bribery etc no enquiry committees have as yet been appointed. Once again the ministers were approached. There were consultations between the ministers, and strike committee leaders. The Millowners' Association came out with a statement (Amrit Bazar Patrika dated 26.5.37) flatly denying that "on resumption of work at the jute mills after the recent strike there had been victimisation of any kind." Once more verbal assurances were given by the ministers but the situation was not altered in the slightest.

### **Barrackpore Shows the Way**

We have said above how Barrackpore was the only place where functioning rank and file local strike committees were formed. Towards the end of the strike, the comrades who were working in this area, began to issue on their own initiative short leaflets. This was quite essential as the leaflets of the Central Strike Committee were few and far between while the millowners were flooding the area with their leaflets. There was an insistent demand from the workers for leaflets. Immediately after the settlement, the Barrackpore Strike Committee came out with a leaflet in which it correctly pointed out that the struggle was not over, but was entering into a new phase. Not one of the demands would be obtained until they kept on the struggle and built up the organisation and strengthened it. It explained to the workers how department committees and factory committees were to be formed and how the day-to-day struggle was to be continued through



them. Every act of oppression, every new grievance, was to be fought on the spot, inside the factory through departmental committees. Such departmental and Mill Committees were to be the foundation stone of the centralised and united union which was being built.

The group of workers who issued the leaflets immediately set to work on this question. They began setting up department committees in most of the Titagarh Mills. The idea was enthusiastically received. To begin with, workers did not bother with the election of the committee etc. The main thing was struggle and action. The bosses were not paying extra wages for extra hours. "Alright, No Extra wages—No extra work. Take on extra men for your extra work". That was the cry. Already on the 15th of May the struggle started in the Titagarh Mills. At first the manager would not grant the demand. There was instantaneous strike in the spinning department. Within a week the *saheb* came round. Sixty five extra hands were employed. The example was catching. One by one the struggle and organisation started in each of the Titagarh mills. The fight began against bribery, against beating, against the minimum quota in the weaving department.

The Red Turbans of the police once again appeared in Titagarh on the 30th of May. There was a strike in Khardah mill in which 6,000 workers were involved. Workers were demanding extra hands. The manager declared a lock out. The workers raised the slogan "open the gates or pay out doles". The gates were opened but the police began arresting union comrades. On the spot a leaflet demanding the release of these comrades was prepared and posted up in the mill. Workers went in a body to the *burra-saheb*, demanding the release of their comrades.

The management had begun to quake and yielded before this spontaneous mass initiative of the workers. The struggle is again spreading to other mills. Recently the women workers of Belvedere Jute Mills in Sankrail resorted to a stay-in-strike demanding increase of wages and the stopping of the bribery of the mill Sardars.

## **Struggle Ahead**

*The workers of Barrackpore and the comrades working there have shown the way. They have shifted the centre of their activities to the department and the mill. It is only through such day-to-day struggle and organisation that a mass Union can be built up. But it must be clearly understood that the fight for the building up of these local organs of struggle is only a part of the bigger fight for building up the broader unity. The partial struggle makes the workers conscious of the unity in the mill and in the department. It is necessary to interpret every partial struggle as a part of the general struggle of the jute workers as a whole. In our day-to-day agitation and propaganda the prospective of the broad struggle of the jute workers as a whole must always be kept before the workers. The spirit of unity and solidarity of the jute workers of Bengal as a whole which was born in the general strike must be broadened and deepened. It must assume concrete organisational forms in the form of a centralised union—which will have its base in the department and Mill committees in every area.*

Great struggles in the Indian jute industry are still ahead. It is necessary to use the respite given by the settlement to prepare them for the struggle. The jute workers of Bengal are the lowest paid workers in the whole of India while the jute industry is the most prosperous. The Jute magnates are making more profits now because of the increase in the price of jute manufactures due to the speculative effect of the strike. Export to foreign countries and to Great Britain is rising by leaps and bounds. The Dundee Jute magnates are rising a hue and cry against the competition of these products of "Cheap Asiatic Labour". The Jute Market correspondent of the Amrita Bazar Patrika stated in his weekly report from London on 15-5-37 that "At the present prices for goods, the Indian Mills can well afford to increase the wages of their workers without in any way depreciating their opportunities of doing business with their own customers". But the Jute magnates of Calcutta have shelved the wage question and sabotaged the enquiry. The Government of Bengal cannot escape

responsibility for this. With the rising capacity of the markets and the price, the jute magnates will be making still greater profits. The workers on the other hand with their cost of living rising, will be having a fall in real wages. Another and a greater wage struggle is in the offing. The next time we must not lag behind in preparation and organisation. The workers must win.

## VII

### **Lessons of the Strike & the Tasks Ahead**

1. The jute workers' struggle, like all the other recent working-class struggles has once again brought to the fore the fact which we have often stressed namely that the **MASSSES ARE MOVING FORWARD TO ACTION WHILE THE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION LAGS BEHIND**. This is the first lesson of the strike. Workers initiated the struggle and they spread it from mill to mill. They threw up their own organisations to defend the strike, to fight the blacklegs and the police. In the aftermath it is the spontaneous initiative of the workers themselves which is mainly responsible for the new phase of the struggle inside the departments and the mills, the struggle to enforce the terms of the settlement, to snatch them out of the unwilling hands of the Jute magnates.

The 'leadership' remained at every phase of the struggle miles behind, always trailed behind the tail of the movement. It was isolated from the masses, was not part and parcel of the masses. A sharp break must be made with the practice of 'leading' the workers movement from a distance — from afar. We have no right to call ourselves militant Trade unionists and Marxists unless we live and work with the masses—unless we are always on the spot to expose every act of oppression, to lead a struggle against it and to interpret its experience to the masses. We cannot liquidate our backwardness in relation to the masses we cannot make our committees the vanguard of the working class masses unless we revise our methods of Trade Union work. The departments, mills, Bustees, must be scenes of our activity. This

work must supplement and reinforce the agitation through mass meetings. Mass unions have to be built in the teeth of terror, repression and provocation. The path lies through the organisation of mill and department committees, through the training of rank and file leaders by the experience of struggle and Marxist study.

2. In India the struggle cannot always be postponed till organisation is built up. Because of the terrible conditions of work and living, because of the backwardness of organisations the struggle always breaks over the heads of leaders. Organisation arises out of such struggles and cannot be counter-posed to struggle. The vacillations of the Marxists to spread the strike speedily, their under-estimation of the tempo of the rising struggle in the early period was a great mistake. The workers would have gained a victory if the action at Barrackpore had coincided with the action at Budge Budge and victory would have been gained at the cost of much less suffering. The subsequent events have proved it.

3. That the workers want unity of action, was proved by this struggle as by the other recent struggles. The task of the leadership is to interpret this urge and to give it an organisational form. The formation of the Central Strike Committee, and the authority it enjoyed among the workers, was itself a reflection of the workers' desire for unity. But the strike committee failed to transform itself into an organ of rank and file unity and struggle. It was not strengthened by the active and day-to-day co-operation of rank and file delegates. It did not take the initiative in organising strike and bustee committees. It did not link itself with such committees wherever they were formed on the initiative of the workers themselves. The Strike Committee did not consequently become the symbol of the organisational unity of all the jute workers in their common struggle against the jute bosses. If the Central Strike Committee was already strengthened by the inclusion of elected delegates of the various mills as was the case with the General Strike Committee of the Bombay textile strike of 1934, it could have, during the struggle, gathered momentum for the launching of a united Jute Mill Workers' Union.

4. It is wrong to say that the workers are backward, that they cannot understand political questions about the struggle against the Constitution etc. This is a petti-bourgeois conception. It must go. When the workers are facing brutal police repression when they are experiencing the falsity of the promises of the "popular" ministers, who but the other day paraded as the supporters of the workers demands, it will be incorrect to say that they cannot understand political propaganda. In India, under the conditions of colonial oppression, every strike becomes a struggle against police terror, against governmental repression. The task of the leadership is to interpret the political significance of every step, of every incident in the strike to the workers. The political education of the working class masses, which a Marxist leadership can achieve within a month of struggle cannot be achieved by years of study-circles and other propaganda. In the present strike there was no political propaganda at all. Neither the Marxists nor the Trade Unionists, explained in their leaflets or their speeches the political significance of the repression during the strike. They failed to make sharp attacks upon the ministers—failed to expose before the workers the hollowness of the new Constitution—failed to expose the claim of Suhrawardy that a new era for labour had dawned. They failed to show how the strike was a part of the anti-imperialist struggle—part of the struggle of the Indian people for Bread, Freedom and Democracy.

Every strike is not a political struggle. But every strike—every incident in it, has a political significance. Every strike is a fight for elementary democratic rights. And what are these democratic rights?—That the workers should have the right to refuse to work when they do not agree to the terms offered to them; that they should not be beaten; that their houses should not be raided and their property destroyed; that they be not driven like slaves to work; that they have a right to form unions; that they have a right to human conditions of living and work; that they have a right to education and leisure. It is for these elementary rights the workers fought. The Government. instituted a regime of terror against the workers who fought for these rights. That is how every

strike—being a struggle for these elementary rights becomes a struggle against the autocratic government—becomes a part of the Anti-Imperialist struggle. It is impossible to separate political agitation from the day-to-day agitation during the strike. On the other hand it is the duty of every Marxist to use every incident—every act of the police and governmental repression to drive the political lesson home, and to raise the political consciousness of the workers. Unless we make determined efforts to make every strike into a struggle against Imperialism, unless we learn to use it to raise the level of political consciousness of the working class, we cannot create the proletarian vanguard, we cannot build up a mass proletarian Party, which must form the backbone of the Anti-Imperialist United Front.

5. Lastly, this strike has shown more than ever that the crying need in Bengal is the training of the working-class cadres. Hundreds of brave workers came forward during the struggle as organisers of local struggles. Hundreds of workers have shown that they can lead, that they can argue with conviction, that they can make effective speeches. Some have shown the capacity for drafting leaflets. These workers will dissipate once again if they are not taken in hand now. It is necessary to concentrate in picking out the best of the fighters who have come forward and to give them political training, it is necessary to advance them to the leadership of local union branches, to educate them to discharge their duties and to:

1. Develop mass initiative in the departments and mills out of daily struggles.
2. Form Mill Committees as units of a Central United Union of all the Jute workers' in Bengal.
3. Work for a real jute workers' conference to inaugurate the union and to coordinate the forces for the coming struggles.
4. Train working class cadres.

## Cawnpore—A Report

P. C. Joshi

Cawnpore has witnessed two successful general strikes in the course of a year. It has begun to be looked upon as a model, as an effective Trade Union centre, as a front-line trench of the United Front movement. Cawnpore not only set an example, it repeated its own victory. The political lessons of Cawnpore have become a part of our ideological consciousness; but unless its organisational lessons are equally well-assimilated, they will not become a part of our daily practice, we would not know how to transform our own town into another Cawnpore, a citadel of the impregnable unity of the people vanquishing all foes, in which the working class leaders doggedly stick to trade union unity and on its basis build the unity of the people, as a whole by forging link by link a united front between the local Congress and Trade Union organisations, a unity which involves no sacrifice of principles by either side but actually advances the common aims of every son of India—greater democratic rights, better living conditions, growing fighting strength.

The story of this gallant struggle covers three distinct chapters, the first general strike (August 1937), the period between the first and the recent general strike, and the period covering and following the second general strike (May-July 1938). It is impossible for me, within the space at my disposal, to describe the chronological normal development of the organisational base. All

I can do is to arbitrarily catalogue the order, organisational forms and the new forms of organisation thrown up by the workers or consciously forged as a result of experience and indicate how they grew from stage to stage, what purpose they served or failed to serve and above all what is the present position and what problems await solution. It is only in fables that the oppressed are given concessions; in history they have to win victories. Again, no gains, as long as the system of oppression and exploitation remains, are permanent, they call for eternal vigilance. It is only through organisation and struggle that the oppressed win victories and advance their gains—a clear understanding of the organisational problems raised, solved or left unsolved. Cawnpore would tell us how to win out victories and the Cawnpore comrades how to keep their victory.

### **Communists and Others at Cawnpore**

From 1934 onwards the Communists have been working inside the Mazdoor Sabha. In those early days of severe repression, experience led to a mutual division of functions. The Communists did the day-to-day field work of the Trade Union, conducted regular study circles, conducted the series of individual strikes and paid the price of it all by always having their most experienced comrades going in and out of jails. The other group led by Comrades Hariharnath Shastri and Raja Ram Shastri was the majority group, holding leading positions in the Sabha, doing the office work, presiding over meetings and carrying on negotiations with the owners when strikes broke out. Despite differences and conflicts, the unity of the Union was preserved all through and an equilibrium established, which was violently upset by the first general strike.

The accumulated effects of the quiet and self-sacrificing day-to-day work of the Communists suddenly became visible to all during the general strike, the Communists were shown to be the leaders of the working class of Cawnpore, enjoying the confidence of an overwhelming majority and possessing effective rank and file cadres who had themselves arisen from within the



working class though they continued to be a minority inside the Union Executive, which had been elected before the strike.

The general strike not only marked a change in the relative position of the two groups, it changed the very nature of the tasks as well. Ten thousand workers joined the Mazdoor Sabha creating the problem of organising a real *mass* union, at least one hundred rank and file militant workers came up during the strike posing the problem of educating *cadres*. These tasks had to be fulfilled within the framework of the policy of unity with the Congress and unity within labour ranks, the very policy which had brought the movement to this *new* advanced stage.

The Communist leaders requested Comrade Jayaprakash to visit Cawnpore, see the situation for himself and help to form a Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.) branch, proletarian in composition, working up the ward Congress Committees as units of the United National Front on the one hand and building a mass Trade Union on the other. Success did not go into the heads of the Communists, it made them realise their responsibilities still more acutely. Comrades Shastries happened to be the usual type of non-working class Trade Union functionaries who import even in the Trade Union movement the traditional organisational methods of the Congress—working from the top, living at the top, to whom “rank and file leadership” is a fine phrase of the Communists to advance their own factional claims, to whom “initiative from below” is a device to expose them, to whom “Trade Union democracy” is just the method of the Communists to have it their own way—the Shastries had been in the Trade Union movement before the birth of the C.S.P. Before the Nagpur split, they were nearer Joshi-Giri group than the militants, after the Calcutta split they opposed the Red T.U.C., and inside the A.I.T.U.C. they supported Alwe-Kandalkar and condemned the Reds for the defeat of the 1934 general strike. After the formation of the C.S.P. they joined it but failed to organise its branch in the very town where they lived and worked and in practice themselves became the C.S.P. The Communists knew it all and yet boldly made the proposal to form a functioning C.S.P. branch, with the 100 or so proletarians found as active militants during the strike, to inspire

confidence that they did not want a C.S.P. to rule the roost and enchain its older leaders. They even agreed that the leading Communists would not join the C.S.P. The proposal was condemned as "self-annihilation" by some sectarians, among the Communists, but it was in reality self-realisation. Living application of Marxism taught the Communists that this was the only way to apply the policy of United Front. Communist influence had grown on the basis of unity of the movement below, and the interests of the movement demanded greater unity at the top to carry through new forms of organisation unifying and solidifying the movement more and more. The Mazdoor Sabha Executive had been elected before the general strike, before the new ten thousand had joined it, before the Communists had become the undisputed leaders of the Cawnpore workers, in which the group of Shastries—was a majority and which therefore became the tail of the movement and at times, actually acted as a drag rather than assume the leadership of the movement. In the interests of T.U. unity the Communists put up with it all, but it degenerated into a pact of non-aggression and having to fulfil the tasks of the T.U. without the help of T.U. itself and sometimes not even in its name. They could have pressed for the general meeting of the Union to hold new elections but that would have meant a certain split, while critical struggles were looming ahead, and this was just what the owners most eagerly desired. The problem was not to eject the older leaders but influence them, make them move with the movement as a whole. It was for these reasons that the Communists so ardently advocated the formation of a local C.S.P. for they knew that with proletarians inside the C.S.P. and at this stage of the movement it could not only act as a transmission belt of the experience and demands of the mass of workers for the older leaders but also train cadres for the movement which was growing from day-to-day and whose natural growth was being hindered because the leaders were lagging behind the movement, were unable to understand its needs and shape its course. The proposal to form a C.S.P. was thus in the true interests of the movement.

The proposal was mistrusted, and not accepted. This multiplied difficulties, division was perpetuated and unity foiled. A whole year has passed by, there are Congress Socialist leaders at Cawnpore but no C.S.P. Once or twice feeble attempts have been made to get together meetings to form a C.S.P. after rigidly excluding all known Communists. Before the meeting was half-way through, it became clear that a majority of comrades present are distinctly pro-Communist, and the attempt to form a C.S.P. is given up ! No C.S.P. can be formed in Cawnpore containing more than 10 active workers if Communists and their sympathisers are to be kept out of it. This simple fact seems to contain no lessons for our C.S.P. comrades !

The problems, both Trade Union and political, which demanded *united* efforts had thus to be tackled *single-handed* by the Communists and even the preservation of this formal unity became *their* endeavour alone. This accounts for serious shortcomings in organisational work. A united mass Socialist party was not formed at the most opportune moment. A second occasion, at a high stage of the movement, as this report will disclose, has offered itself. Would the C.S.P. comrades let it go by once again ? Would they make the achievement of Socialist unity impossible except through bitter experience ?

## **Mazdoor Sabha**

Before the first general strike it had a stable membership of about 3 thousand. The success of the strike brought 10 thousand new members into the Sabha in September 1937, and there the progress stopped. It is very important to understand the reasons for this.

This seemingly sudden expansion of the base of the movement had taken place under Communist influence and became the dismay of the older T.U. leadership and was considered almost as a personal loss by them. They almost acted in a way that the interests of the union were posed against the daily interests of the workers. Immediately after the settlement, the owners began a campaign of provocation and victimisation and individual strikes broke out but they took no active part in them. This called the

enthusiasm of the mass of workers for the Union as such. The owners then tried the game of simultaneously splitting the workers communally and provoking them to premature conflict by getting the slogan of immediate declaration of general strike to fight the owners (1) victimisation put across through the Muslim League which also began a campaign that the Mazdoor Sabha was a Hindu body and a tool of the Congress Ministry. The old leadership of the union did not even lift their little finger to fight this menace. In fact, they hardly made a secret of their view that the Communists had sown the whirlwind and must now reap the harvest. Communists, a large number of whom were Muslim proletarians fought out this danger successfully and the Congress leaders freely admitted that it was they who saved Cawnpore from a grave communal riot. Over and above, this was the work of the Inquiry Committee—preparation of material, leading evidence, cross-examining the owners. Failure to enlarge the Union membership, despite the above difficulties, constituted one of the serious failings of the period between the first and second general strike in the work of the Communists. It is true that every comrade had more day-to-day work than he could cope with. It is also true that they continued to popularize the Mazdoor Sabha on a mass scale through the endless meetings they held. But they failed to link up their general agitational work, their struggle against the Muslim League. Their conduct of the individual strikes, their collection of material for the Inquiry Committee with *concrete* popularisation of the Union, i.e., day-to-day enrolment into it. It is however true that their work saved the name of the Mazdoor Sabha and created a solid foundation for a real mass Union which would function as such hereafter.

After the first general strike the enthusiasm of the workers was great and the influence of the Mazdoor Sabha had extended but it was not a deep influence. It was the first general strike that the Cawnpore workers had known after the post-war days and it too had lasted only about a week. The general level of class-consciousness remained very low and the ideological equipment and experience of even the militant workers was not enough to face squarely a very complicated situation. As months

rolled by a planned victimisation of the militants began and the Inquiry Committee proceedings went on and this terrorised the backward workers and gave disruptive elements like the Muslim League a chance to spread their poisonous propaganda.

Immediately after the Report of the Rajendra Prasad Committee came out, conceding the demands of workers, an intense agitation was launched in its favour, mass enthusiasm went up with a bound and burst out in the second general strike.

This second general strike lasted 50 days. It not only restored the influence of the Mazdoor Sabha but further extended it. The duration of the strike, the day-to-day experience of struggle, endless stream of ideological-political propaganda carried on by the Communists has deepened the consciousness of the mass of the workers. Loyalty to the Mazdoor Sabha dominates his mind and he has become a disciplined soldier of his class and no more a camp-follower of "leaders" whom he regarded as being above him. Not mere mass enthusiasm but widespread Trade Union consciousness prevails. When I was at Cawnpore, soon after the strike, all groups expected 25 thousand workers to pay up Mazdoor Sabha subscription on the second pay-day after the mills had opened.

### **Mill Committees**

Before the first strike they existed only in a few mills, organised by the Communists. They were a semi-secret group of individual militant workers, contacts picked up by the Communists through their day-to-day work. They collected and discussed the grievances of their mill, found the money for the handbill detailing them, and got the workers to attend the mill-gate meeting. On other evenings they met together as a study circle. The more active among them got victimised and joined the ranks of the professional revolutionaries or pressed hard by continued unemployment and worries of the family they drafted back to their village-homes. The slogan of the mill committee however had been very extensively popularised.

Immediately after the first general strike, the workers spontaneously formed mill committees without any actual

direction from above, even by the Communists. They were the real organisational acquisition of the first strike and were a nightmare to the owners.

The older Trade Union leaders were not fond of rank and file organisations. When the owners' victimisation etc., began and individual mills came out on strike under the leadership of their mill committees, they not only actively help to run these strikes but frowned upon the mill committees. This led to a feeling of rivalry, if not hostility, between the mill committees and the Trade Union. The nemesis was reached when instead of welcoming the mill committees and recognising them as the basic units of the Majdoor Sabha they proposed rules for the mill committees which further widened the breach between them.

The Communists had, on the one hand, to fight for the right of the mill committees with the older leadership and on the other to struggle against what in the beginning was anarchic exuberance born of an easy victory, based on an over-estimation of their own strength. The militants who constituted these mill committees reflected in a heightened form the elemental enthusiasm which had seized the mass of workers at the time of the first strike, they lacked maturity born of experience, and a sense of perspective which comes from socialist education. The attitude of the older leadership would have thrown these militants to the wolves, real pioneers of a movement which was for the first-time becoming a real mass movement.

The owners knew this fundamental weakness when they launched their policy of provocation by victimising group by group, mill after mill, the leaders of the mill committees. Muslim League propaganda was another part of their policy.

The Communists achieved a feat when they won and kept the confidence of the mill committees and through them of the mass of workers and made them accept the policy, that another general strike, so soon after the first one, only on the issue of victimisation, would not be enthusiastically supported by the entire mass of workers at the present stage of their consciousness, nor by the non-proletarian elements before the findings of the Inquiry Committee were out; that it would be playing straight into

the owners' hands and courting disaster, that this was the period of intense organisation and preparation. They did not talk this down to the mill committee members but helped them to come to these conclusions not only by persistent propaganda among them but primarily through their devoted labour of helping the mill committees to organise themselves and their work, by being one with them in every way. They also became the living links between the Mazdoor Sabha and the mill committees and their work became a living proof for the mill committee members that the Mazdoor Sabha was not identical with its older leadership which sat apart from them, unconcerned with their daily mounting troubles. Even the Communists could not completely stem the tide. Except in four or five mills, the mill committees as functioning bodies ultimately collapsed when most of their members got victimised and many of them imprisoned under security sections, the remaining members kept contact with the Communists and kept the torch-burning inside the mills. The Communists sacrificed everything else (except preparations for the Enquiry) to keep the remaining mill committees going and maintain the above contacts. Recompense soon came.

When the second strike broke out mill committees again sprang up and functioned virtually as local strike committees and became responsible for the day-to-day conduct of the strike and its ultimate victory.

Today functioning of mill committees exist in all the mills. Their personnel has been strengthened by the inclusion of new members. They are not yet elected bodies. As before they are bodies of militants who came forward during the struggle and who are accepted as the accredited leaders of their departments by the rest of the workers. Formerly all, who cared, could attend its meetings and participate in it. Today these meetings are far more formal and business-like and not mere consultations. Proper minutes are kept, resolutions are taken down, they have offices of their own, collect a subscription of one anna per worker for their own work (besides the union dues). They not only discuss the problem and grievances of their mill but also general Trade Union work. The old rivalry towards the Mazdoor Sabha has

disappeared and unbounded loyalty to it prevails. They have become more mature as trade unionists.

### **Mohalla and Hata Committees**

Hata is an enclosure containing anywhere from 20 to 200 working class tenements. A hata is very often the property of one landlord. A large number of hatas constitute one mohalla.

After the last general strike, section 144 was almost perpetually in operation. When gate-meetings were not possible the comrades had to turn their attention to the residence of the workers. Again the enthusiasm of the textile workers had been caught by other sections of workers and different strata of the town poor. They naturally looked to the advanced textile workers and the comrades working in the locality for guidance. This led to the birth of Mohalla Committees.

Before the second general strike there were only a few Mohalla Committees which existed specially in those areas which were far away from the mill committee offices.

During the second general strike open mass meetings were permitted only in a few maidans. The problem was how to keep up the enthusiasm of the backward workers and not depend only on those who came to the general mass meetings. Our comrades and active workers were asked to form Mohalla Committees to intensify agitation in the hatas and organise the militant workers residing therein for two purposes (1) to resist attempts to enrol blacklegs, (2) to bring the mass of workers to mass meetings and draw them in various activities. The slogan of the formation of Hata Committees was promptly taken up by the workers, they enrolled volunteers, collected names for relief, organised resistance to the pressure of the house-owners to eject them for failure to pay rents. Our comrades held in the afternoon 20-25 Hata meetings per day and these became the mainstay of the strength of the strike.

Representatives of Hata Committees joined together to constitute the Mohalla Committees. Old Mohalla Committees which were ad hoc bodies now got strengthened. They have continued to function even after the second strike and the first



problem they took up after the strike was an intense agitation for getting complete remission of the rent of the strike period. Many of the house-owners have given complete and some partial remission. Some Mohalla Committees have volunteers attached to them.

They gather grievances on a residential basis e.g., about latrines, water-taps, lighting etc. It is proposed to develop, through them, agitation for the redress of municipal grievances and enrol members into the Mazdoor Sabha.

### **“Centres”**

There are no Mazdoor Sabha branches. Immediately after the first strike the Communists proposed the formation of union branches but it was turned down by the older leadership obviously for fear that they will be manned by the Communists for the Communists alone had cadres while they had none. This constituted a calamity because it meant not establishing any organisational link between the Mazdoor Sabha head-office and the mill committees and accentuating rather than checking tendency towards decentralisation and primitive anarchism which was unfortunately present in the mill committees.

The “centre” is not a very formal affair. It means a cheap hired room where at least one comrade stays all the 24 hours. There is one comrade-centre-incharge, at least one intellectual is attached to it, and all the worker-comrades residing in that area. They are responsible for the work of the mill committees in their area, hold study circles which are irregular, and carry through not only the gate but also the hata campaigns. They are the instruments for getting all decisions implemented by the mass of workers. They have become the resort of all conscious workers and volunteers who came there with reports and seek guidance.

During the second general strike they linked up the work of the mill committees with the mohalla committees and both these with the central strike committee. Activists’ group meetings were held here, food tickets distributed and volunteers given their orders. It was the gruelling work done at the centres, capacity for leadership displayed from time to time, that endeared the Communists to the

mass of workers, sanctified the name of communism to an extent that every advanced worker considers it a matter of pride to be called a Communist and addressed as "comrade".

These centres have thus become *de facto* Mazdoor Sabha branches, and the mill committees or the area have also removed their offices to them or to an adjoining room, thus rendering the task of coordination and guidance easier and more manageable.

### **Central Strike Committee**

It consisted of 10 representatives from each mill and 10 each from the Mazdoor Sabha and City Congress Committee. The President and General Secretary of the Mazdoor Sabha were its ex officio President and General Secretary. It appointed a sub-committee for negotiations of 9 persons, Comrades Hariharnath Shastri and Raja Ram Shastri (C.S. Pers), R.D. Bharadwaj and S.S. Yusuf (Communists)—all of them leaders of the Mazdoor Sabha—and Pandit Balkrishna Sharma, President of local Congress and four rank and file workers. Comrade Arjun Arora was appointed the G. O. C. of the Red Volunteers.

The Central Strike Committee was the supreme organ for deciding the policy and responsible for the conduct and leadership of the strike. It used to meet every afternoon. Problems were brought for decision by the members from different places and the Committee gave its decisions on the spot. The Committee gave general instructions to the Negotiation Sub-Committee and the settlement was unanimously endorsed by it. On the whole, the Committee, worked smoothly and became the instrument of giving the struggle a united leadership. Through their work inside this Committee, the Communists again won spurs. They came to be regarded by the proletarian members of the Committee, who were the cream of the Cawnpore workers, not only as fearless fighters, but as responsible leaders who are ever-prepared to learn from the rank and file and who further no other interests except those of the movement.

The Committee ceased to exist after the general strike; but the advanced workers continue to come to the Communists for

guidance and frequent the centres. They have not yet been organisationally consolidated.

## **Red Volunteers**

As the mill committees were the biggest single organisational achievement of the first strike the organisation of the Red Volunteers was of the second strike.

The first general strike had hardly any properly organised volunteers. Hastily the active elements attached a red badge to their arm did the work in their own way. There was no control worth the name and they disappeared with the strike.

During the second strike the Red Volunteers were about 2 thousand, nearly 60 per cent of them being Muslims and mostly youngmen. This time they were well-organised and attached to every mill committee. Their duties were picketing (day and night. 6 hours duty for every batch) at the mill-gates and in the residential areas, organisation of social boycott of anti-strike elements especially those clerks who insisted on going to work, by beat of drums to popularise the decisions of the Central Strike Committee, and addressing Hata and Mohalla meetings. They also managed to evolve a fairly efficient Information and Courier Service.

They were divided into batches, each under a captain. Each mill had 5 or 6 captains, under a commander. Over the commander was the G.O.C. The orders of the Strike Committee were communicated by the G.O.C. to the commanders who set the rest into motion. Daily meetings of commanders were held, who, in their turn, hold a daily rally of the volunteers in their charge. Every Sunday witnessed a rally of the volunteers, salutation of the Red Flag, drill, parade, and a lecture at the end.

Two hundred and nine of these volunteers have been through jail for their part in the strike. The organisation of the Red Volunteers has not been liquidated with the strike nor has their enthusiasm waned.

A remarkable phenomenon was the emergence of 200 women volunteers. A little over 25% were wives of workers and themselves workers. five per cent were housewives, i.e., they did

not themselves go to work, and the rest were women workers mostly widows. This in a Purdah ridden province and as such it was a testimony to the fact how widely and deeply the strike had stirred the entire proletarian mass. They were specialised in picketing and won the admiration of all, for the devoted and brave manner in which they discharged their duties. Thirty to fifty of them would join a permanent volunteer corps. Two of them have been elected to the general council of the Mazdoor Sabha.

### **Relief Work and the Congress**

Pandit Balakrishna Sharma, President of the Cawnpore Congress Committee had declared in the beginning of the strike "Not one worker shall go back to work because of starvation". He proved true to his word.

The distribution of relief began only 15 days after the strike, a fortnight too early, judging by the usual standard of strike-relief in our country. But it had to be started so early because some of the Communal elements, to discredit the Congress, began to exploit the misery of the workers and egged on the more backward workers to press for relief.

Out of 45 thousand strikers about 20 thousand went away to their village-homes, relief was distributed regularly to 10 thousand needy strikers.

The City Congress Committee fixed quotas for every Ward Committee whose active members went round in groups of two or three and collected relief from house to house, in cash or kind. They not only collected relief but popularised, during the course of their rounds, the political significance of the strike as well. It was not merely the impregnable solidarity of the strikers themselves but also the painstaking propagandist work of these batches of Congressmen that turned the sympathy of the entire town towards the strike.

Later on the UPPCC through a resolution called upon the entire Congress in the province to support the strike and itself donated 2 thousand rupees, and most of the help that came from outside was from the District Congress Committees of U.P. The Congressmen and the Trade Unionists and above all the Congress Socialists and

the Communists of other provinces did not do their duty by Cawnpore.

Four distribution centres were started, all manned by Congressmen. Distribution was controlled through printed cards giving the amount of relief etc. which were issued through the Mazdoor Sabha.

Active support of the Congress did not end with the collection and organisation of relief. In significant words Pandit Balakrishna Sharma had proclaimed "The Congress is not a Seva Samiti, it is a political organisation". Under his leadership the Cawnpur Congress did all that a national democratic organisation could be expected to do. Congressmen participated in day-to-day agitation as vigorously as any Trade Union leader. Their vigilance was a great factor in curbing police high-handedness. Congress volunteers, under their own leaders, but in unity with the Red Volunteers and their leaders, actively participated in every phase of strike-work, including picketing. Cawnpore Congress Committee through its delegation of ten members in the Central Strike Committee was also associated with the leadership of the strike. They were a help rather than a hindrance in the conduct of the strike. In the daily meetings of the Strike Committee they effectively put forward the attitude of the non-proletarian masses to the changing course of the strike and thus helped to guide the strike in a way that the proletariat may continue to enjoy the support of the non-proletarian elements. It is to the abiding glory of Cawnpore Congress that even when their view-point was not accepted by the Central Strike Committee they accepted its decisions as their own and what is more carried them out. Proletarian struggle not only became a peoples' struggle but it was also headed by a united peoples' leadership.

Cawnpore Congressmen and Trade Unionists both say with justifiable pride—"we have given a lead to the rest of the country".

This united front work has brought about far-reaching changes in the outlook of various elements and it is of immense significance for the future. Loyalty of the mass of proletarians towards the National Congress comes only after their loyalty to the Mazdoor Sabha and they rightly see no conflict in their

loyalties. Rank and file Congressmen and even local Congress leaders have begun to see the necessity of proletarian struggle and proletarian organisation for advancing national struggle and strength. As a result of the successful general strike a wave of enthusiasm and organisation is sweeping over the proletariat, other workers and artisans besides those of textiles, are setting up their T.U. and Congressmen are actively helping them. They also offer their co-operation and help in the day-to-day work of the Mazdoor Sabha.

Congressmen, from Pandit Balakrishna Sharma downwards, have come to honour the Communists as the most effective and selfless anti-imperialist group and what is more they also admit that their virtues come from their being Communists. But this is not all. As yet they do not regard the Communists as one of themselves, within the Congress fold. They are as yet suspicious of the loyalty of our comrades to the Congress, they do not completely trust our bona fides as Congressmen. This too they think arises from our being Communists ! Old prejudices die hard, persistent anti-Communist propaganda by the Imperialists and other vested interests continues to get the better of us in some ways without our allies being conscious of it, every little and accidental mistake of ours or even of a single comrade assumes a different meaning in their eyes and become a source to raise doubts in their minds about our very bona fides. At this present stage mistakes in our attitude towards or work in the Congress no more have the objective character of errors but should be regarded by us, at least, just because we are Communists, as crimes.

### **Communists and their Functioning**

It is true that the Communists have been the driving-force behind the great movement which stands victorious today at Cawnpore, carrying through the policy of United National Front and building an impregnable fighting front on its basis. If the great credit goes to them so does the responsibility for the shortcomings. It is thus of supreme importance to self critically examine their functioning as Communists because it is this which is the decisive factor.

Communists are a young rising force, their cadres too are naturally young, lacking the maturity that comes from long experience. These very comrades have been faced with a complicated situation and a movement which has been growing at a tremendous tempo. Naturally a wide-lag developed between the needs of the movement and their own capacities to cope with them.

It is of interest to examine the organisational turns they make to be able to shape the mass movement more and more effectively.

Before the first general strike they functioned in practice as one single group meeting all together to decide upon the work to be done or as a study circle of their own and going out in a bunch to the place of "work"—to mass work was limited and comrades had not developed initiative of their own.

After the general strike it became a drag on any work, e.g., mill committees had grown up under their very noses but they themselves were not rooted in them and floated from mill committee to mill committee, mohalla to mohalla all in a group, the Trade Union had secured a mass membership but the membership was not organised, the workers' case had to be led before the Inquiry Committee but there was no information or statistics available. It took 4 long months' bitter experience of failures in individual strikes, and the spectre of the rise of the influence of Muslim League before the new organisations turn was effectively made. Individual comrades were delegated to man the centres and be responsible for the entire work in their area, live there and not come to the headquarters unless called for. Some were delegated for the Mazdoor Sabha office and inquiry work. During this stage a rapid gradation took place. Some of the ex-student comrades crashed—"I have not learnt Marxism to do clerical work" type--when they had to write up tens of applications per day containing workers' grievances and old chummeries were split up. Pressure of day-to-day work was so great that every comrade was yoked to practical work and collective education almost given up. This adversely affected some of the worker-comrades. As militant workers they were taken in the Communist ranks but given no Communist education. There was however greater system in day-to-day work and more output. Muslim League offensive was successfully defeated,

within and around the mill committees militant workers became organised, comrades developed capacities of leadership. Thus the organisational basis for the second strike was created.

After this decentralisation had taken place a co-ordinating mechanism was being set up to link together the comrades working in different areas. But it could never assume a stable form because the comrades responsible for co-ordination were being rushed off to danger-spots. This machinery almost collapsed during the general strike. Thus no collective communist leadership was evolved. One leading comrade continued to be the leader. Failure to train this leadership has meant that the entire basis of our work is very insecure--it rests on one comrade.

The Cawnpore Communists have become more steeled, better organised, more effective but they miss inspiration in their daily work. This is directly attributable to their not getting enough opportunities for ideological discussions of their daily problems and thus losing a sense of perspective, and to a failure to select, train and promote cadres. These defects too are generally recognised and when they are remedied then alone any further improvement in their own work will follow.

## Tasks

(1) *Unity of Leadership:* As I have said this has assumed the peculiar form of a pact of non-aggression and offers difficulties which cannot be solved by the efforts of Communists alone. There are old Trade Union leaders but not responsive to influences from the mass of workers, because they do not believe in organising the T.U. rank and file or raising basic organisations. There are local C.S.P. leaders but there is no local C.S.P. So they are answerable to nobody but themselves. They are not active from day-to-day and thus they cannot be influenced through their own experience. The growth of the movement is accompanied by a rapid increase in the influence of the Communists and this is regarded as a personal loss by them and a threat to their own leadership. One of them has begun to take, of late, a left-adventurist stand, which, in practice, would mean disruption.

In such a situation what is to be done ? Even formal unity which at present exists must be preserved at all costs. Better functioning of the Mazdoor Sabha would directly aid the preservation of unity. If the C.S.P. leadership would not form a



broad-based C.S.P. for fear of the Communists, we have to appeal to them to form any sort of C.S.P. so that we may have unity with the existing C.S.P. Even if the C.S.P. does not move, we have to rely on ourselves and patiently and persistently explain every new move initiated by us to them personally, consult them beforehand so that at least avoidable misunderstandings are eliminated. A split would demoralise the backward workers and give the chance of their lives to the owners. It is the task of the Communists to see that they do and go on doing all that they can to prevent a split in the T.U. leadership even though it may not mean splitting the working-class.

(2) *Training of Cadres*: This assumes two forms :

- (a) Training for Communist leadership. The existing Communist cadres by regularly running their study circles, deepening their knowledge of Marxism, by giving greater attention to the task of co-ordination and supervision and delegating comrades for this task and by giving more and more guidance in practical work coupled with an ideological political explanation of the steps suggested. This would immediately improve the quality of our work and give it stability.
- (b) Training of militant workers as new Communist cadres. There are about 400-500 militant workers, drawn from the mill committees, volunteers, mohalla committees, who have elementary class-consciousness which is flowering into political consciousness and who are working with us from day-to-day. They understand the role of the working class in the national struggle, and on Trade Unionism. They accept United Front with the Congress and also that their partial struggle is part of the wider struggle against Imperialism. Not one of them believes to-day that the help of "Sarkar" can be secured against the owners, which was one of the prevalent illusions before the general strike. They call themselves Communists. They have to be given elementary socialist education and trained into being T.U. functionaries and cadres for doing Congress work. An unending series of short-term classes must be run

for them, with the courses written out in their own vernaculars and attached for practical work to the existing centres under the discipline of comrades already working there. It is only thus that these rising sons of the working class will not be lost to their own class and to the nation as was the sad experience of the 1935 general strike in Bombay and to some extent after the August 1937 strike in Cawnpore itself. It is only when these militant workers have been trained into Communist workers that the gains of the general strike will be organisationally consolidated and Cawnpore will witness still mightier struggles and greater victories. The basic problem of our movement today is that of cadres and our Cawnpore comrades, have its solution before their eyes and within their hands.

(3) *Mass enrolment into the Mazdoor Sabha*: 25 thousand members must be enrolled within a month and the slogan "all 45 thousands inside the Sabha within 6 months" advanced and implemented. Today the Mazdoor Sabha can be made a genuine mass union, with mill committees as its basic units at the place of production and mohalla committees on the basis of locality.

(4) *Congress work of the new Type*: Communists have been able to achieve united front between the local Congress and Mazdoor Sabha not by themselves doing Congress work and moving the Congress from within but through actual struggle and by maintaining political contact with the local Congress leadership. So far lack of time and cadres has been the pretext for neglecting organisational work within the Congress and as Congressmen. If the advanced workers are given political education there should be no lack of cadres. The dream of Sharmaji, of which he has spoken so often, must assume real form; T.U. branch and Ward Congress Committee offices must be in the same building, more and more Congressmen must be drawn in day-to-day T.U. work and active workers and Communists must work up the Congress primaries as efficiently and vigorously as they have worked up the Mazdoor Sabha with the technique of moving the whole mass behind each step planned from above; and on top of this building from where all this work is done the Tricolour and the Red Flag must fly together. As yet the great

United National Front movement of Cawnpore has no organisational base of its own,—down below, and as long as this is so, it is not safe from storms and the attacks of our enemies who have already become panicky.

(5) The Red Volunteers must on no account be disbanded but organised as the permanent Volunteer Corps of the Union. In the greater struggles that loom ahead a trained corps of Volunteers would be an asset of great value.

(6) *Trade Union Press*: The weekly organ of the Mazdoor Sabha, *the Mazdoor* is at present being run in the factional interests of the older group. This must be stopped and *the Mazdoor* run as an organ of the T.U. movement, a non-party paper advocating the policy of the Sabha and bringing the mass of workers into it and into the united national struggle.

## Prospects

The annual general elections of the Mazdoor Sabha have recorded an overwhelming Communist victory. The great trust the Cawnpore workers have reposed in Communist leadership have doubled its responsibilities, which they can only discharge by fulfilling them as true Bolsheviks the tasks facing them.

If our Cawnpore comrades successfully tackle the organisational tasks facing them, they will be influencing events beyond Cawnpore. Their August 1937 general strike set in motion, the nationwide wave of textile struggles which resulted in the appointment of Inquiry Committees leading to an wage-increase. The struggle for Trade Union recognition and social legislation is yet on; it will emerge victorious only on the basis of the organised strength of the working-class and the broad peoples' support behind working-class demands. In this new round as well, Cawnpore already occupies a very advanced position; it has almost won T.U. recognition and if the other textile centres line up together, through an All-India Textile Conference, an irresistible movement for social legislation like minimum wage, holidays with pay etc. could be effectively initiated. The textile workers of India have always been at the head of the Indian working-class and the Cawnpore workers today lead the textile workers. A victory of the textile workers would be not only their own victory but would effect the future of the entire working-class.

The developments in Cawnpore would not only effect the working-class but the national movement as well. U.P. is becoming the hub of the coming struggle against the Federation, it has the most Left Congress, a popular Ministry which moves with the people, a rising Kisan movement which is winning greater and greater Congress support. In such a province, Cawnpore, its industrial centre steeped through two general strikes and steeped in United Front spirit, is the natural leader of the whole people.

The work of our Cawnpore comrades, therefore, has assumed national importance.

## Message Sent By C.P.G.B. To Haripura Congress

*[The Indian National Congress met at Haripura from February 19 to 22, under the presidency of Subhas Bose. Below we print messages of greetings sent from this country. Next month we shall be printing a special article on the results of the Congress.]*

We take this opportunity to send our heartiest greetings to the Indian National Congress meeting in session at Haripura, and in doing so we wish to convey through the Congress our support and solidarity with the great mass of Indian people throughout the length and breadth of India in their struggle for freedom.

To the Indian people the National Congress represents the National Front uniting all forces in India who are struggling against foreign domination and for national liberation. During the past twelve months we have witnessed the most amazing expressions of solidarity and support of the Indian people for the Congress. The results of the elections in February last with the sweeping majorities won by Congress candidates showed the loyalty of the Indian masses to the Congress. A further indication of this support is shown by the increase in membership of the Congress from 6 lacs (600,000) to 31 lacs (3,100,000).

With such support from the people of India, the Congress can face with confidence the important issues which will be dealt with at the forthcoming session at Haripura. The Haripura Session will mark the entry upon a new phase of India's struggle for freedom.

Message sent by the Communist Party of Great Britain to Haripura Congress, presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose. Published in: "THE LABOUR MONTHLY", of March 1938, London.

The acceptance of office by the Congress in seven out of the eleven Provincial Legislative Assemblies raised many important and difficult problems. For over six months now the Congress Ministries have functioned in these seven provinces. It must be recorded with appreciation that, unlike the non-Congress Ministries in the other provinces, these Congress Ministries have taken steps to extend the extremely restricted civil liberties; removing the ban on numerous organisations, individuals and publications—and certain limited measures have been adopted to relieve the burdens from the peasantry.

The Congress Ministries, when taking these initial and limited steps, however, were immediately brought face to face with problems—problems which must be the concern of the Congress as a whole. An indication of the character of these problems appeared at the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Calcutta in October last.

These initial steps of the Congress Ministers to implement their election pledges were not taken without opposition. Pressure was undoubtedly brought to bear, although not ostensibly, by the Governors, who, of course, have their special powers under the Constitution to limit as far as possible whatever reforms the Congress Ministers sought to initiate. A very recent example of this is the refusal of Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of Behar, to release political prisoners who are on hunger strike in Hazaribang Jail despite the unanimous recommendation of the Congress Ministers.

The problems thus facing the Congress Ministries are those of carrying out the election programme in relation to the economic questions affecting the workers and peasants; vigorously refusing to operate repressive measures (Sections 144 and 124a, Criminal Law Amendments Act), refusing to sanction prosecutions against working-class and peasant leaders, and cases of alleged sedition; and taking steps to remove from the Statute Book all repressive legislation. Thus the Congress Ministries carry an extremely heavy responsibility to the great mass of Indian people.

On behalf of the National Liberation Movement the Congress Ministries have taken upon themselves an extremely difficult task

and a heavy responsibility, in which they have to be supported and strengthened—while on the other hand the Congress Ministries can play an important part in assisting and building the United National Front, which is the main task before the people of India.

The mobilisation of the masses behind the economic programme of the Congress would greatly strengthen the hands of the Congress Ministries, and enable them more effectively to carry through the economic side of their election programme. This mass movement can be built up on a clear programme of immediate demands for workers, peasants and middle-class. Such a programme would be concretely formulated and of a practical character, containing demands such as the bringing of relief to the peasantry by reduction of taxation and a debt moratorium, establishing a minimum wage and reducing hours of labour for the workers, the removal of restrictions on the organisations of the workers, improvement of educational facilities, health, housing sanitation and the removing from the Statute Book of all repressive laws—which have a possibility of being achieved through the present Legislative Assembly.

The phenomenal growth of the peasant movement, accompanied by huge peasant demonstrations and the big strike movements of workers in the industrial towns, has been an important feature of the past twelve months. Behar can boast of 500,000 organised peasants; demonstrations can be organised of 50,000 peasants marching from surrounding villages; this is a feature of what is developing throughout India.

This great strike movement and mass peasant marches demanding redress for their economic grievances, demonstrates the growing consciousness and organisation of the masses. We welcome the achievement of Trade Union unity and the extraordinary growth of the Kisan Sabhas. Here we have the limitless potential force which will provide the greatest strength for the Congress. It will also be easily appreciated that the building and strengthening of the working-class and peasant movements is not hostile to the Congress or Congress Ministries. The workers and peasants are not merely concerned with some

immediate economic relief, but desire to strengthen the whole movement for national liberation and have an extremely important and growing role to play within it.

From this it would be clear that Congress organisation and Congress Ministries will see the Haripura Session of the Congress as the point from which to drive to assist the workers and peasants to win their economic demands; to see the growing strike movement and peasant demonstrations as the growing movement for national liberation, and therefore to assist in strengthening and building the Trade Union and Peasant movements, recognising them as the most important sections of the national movement.

If the Faizpur decision to establish mass contact committees is carried forward at Haripura to a full recognition of the need for collective affiliation of the Trade Union and Peasant organisations, we feel sure that this would greatly strengthen the whole movement.

The Haripura Session of the Congress will consider the question of the efforts of the Government to impose the Federal side of the Constitution. Lord Lothian has been touring India, visiting prominent persons in an endeavour to estimate the opinion of Indian people on this question. He has returned to London and it is suggested that he has brought with him a formula on which the Federal Government will be introduced.

The question of the attitude of the vast mass of the Indian people towards the Federal Government will be decided, not by a formula satisfactory to certain elements in India and to the British Government, but by the Indian National Congress representing the vast masses of Indian people.

The question of how this new stage of the fight will be conducted will depend largely on the strength of the Congress and the development of the mass movement. Very careful consideration will undoubtedly be given by the Haripura Session to the attitude of the Congress to the introduction of the Federal Government. The question is raised in this connection of the need



to support the struggle of the people in the Indian States for democratic rights and civil liberties.

We warmly welcome the stand of the Indian National Congress on important international questions, particularly the struggle of the Spanish people against fascist aggression. The practical steps taken to effectively boycott Japanese goods strengthen the bonds of solidarity between the people of a country subjected to foreign Imperialism and a people struggling to prevent themselves being brought under foreign domination.

In sending this message of greetings to the Indian National Congress and in raising certain points, we do so in all sincerity, the message representing as it does the feelings of a very large number of the people of Great Britain who desire to see India free. We at the same time fully appreciate our own tremendous responsibility in relation to the struggle for the liberation of the Indian people.

We are confident that the Haripura Session of the Congress will, as a result of its deliberations, achieve the final unification of all the forces standing for national liberation under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, and that the hands of the Congress Ministries in the various provinces will be strengthened by its decisions.

This session of the National Congress held at Haripura in the Bardoli District, which has already achieved fame in connection with the liberation struggle, must give a lead to the Indian National Congress and take a decisive step towards the final liberation of the great Indian people.

Ben Bradley,  
R. Palme Dutt,  
Harry Pollitt.

## India: The Haripura Congress\*

**Ben Bradley**

The Indian National Congress held its 51st Session during last month at Haripura in the District of Bardoli. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, who has held office as President for more than eighteen months, the Congress has grown by leaps and bounds. The actual membership was shown to have increased since the last session which was held at Faizpur, from 600,000 to 3,100,000. This growth of support to the Congress was reflected at the Haripura Session.

Haripura is an Indian village which was transformed into a new town for the purpose of holding the Congress. Well over 200,000 people attended the Congress Session representing every Province and District in British India, and many Indian States, and in this vast concourse was expressed the voice of the 350,000,000 Indian people in their intense desire to be freed from foreign domination.

Mammoth crowds, estimated at more than half a million people, witnessed the procession and paid homage to the President-Elect, Subhas Chandra Bose, who was conveyed along the four mile route from Haripura to Vithalnagar in a chariot drawn by 51 bulls to the opening of the Congress Session.

This Congress Session was being held under the shadow of a constitutional crisis, a crisis which had been precipitated by the Governor-General in his unwarranted interference with the functions of the Ministers of Bihar and the United Provinces. This challenge of the Viceroy was accepted and the Ministers of these two Provinces resigned. The tense atmosphere created by this crisis did not, however, have the effect upon the Haripura Session which might have been expected. While all the features

\* Published in "THE LABOUR MONTHLY", April 1938, London

were there which may have given rise to an extremely serious situation, actually the character of the Haripura Session was milder than any Session held since the Civil Disobedience Movement was called off.

### **For an Independent and United India**

Subhas Chandra Bose in his Presidential address reminded the delegates of the latest authoritative pronouncement made by the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting in Calcutta last October declaring its policy regarding minorities, and of the Congress Resolution on Fundamental Rights, and said "the objective of the Congress is an independent and United India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit another to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may co-operate together for the common good and the advancement of the people of India." Whilst one of the main features of British Imperialist policy in India is that of "divide and rule," setting one community against another, the Congress is increasing its strength and influence among all sections.

"Regarding reconstruction" Subhas Bose said, "our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system, including the abolition of landlordism." In order to deal with the industrial problem he said "To solve the economic problem agricultural improvement will not be enough. A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under State ownership and State control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in place of the old one which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home."

### **The Stranglehold of Imperialism**

In dealing with the Federal Scheme, Subhas Bose was of the opinion that one of the most objectionable features of the proposed Federation was the commercial and financial safeguards, through which the Viceroy on behalf of British Capitalism would exercise a stranglehold, thus preventing any industrial development. Under the new Constitution it would

never be possible for a popular Government to exercise control over expenditure.

He gave a very striking reference to show how the Central Government at present operates. According to the budget of the Central Government for the year 1937-38, the army expenditure comes to 44.61 crores of rupees (£ 33.46 millions) out of a total expenditure of 77.90 crores of rupees (£ 58.42 millions)—that is, roughly, 57 per cent of the total expenditure of the Central Government. By an overwhelming majority in the Central Legislative Assembly this expenditure was rejected. The Viceroy, however, ignores this adverse vote and certifies the expenditure. Under the Federal Government, which will be controlled by the Viceroy, he will handle 80 per cent of the Federal expenditure.

Subhas Bose called for closer co-operation between the Congress and the Trade Union Congress and Peasant organisations. On the question of affiliation he said: "Personally, I hold the view that the day will come when we shall have to grant this affiliation in order to bring all progressive and anti-imperialist organisations under the influence and control of the Congress."

Referring to his recent visit to England Subhas Chandra Bose said: "I am greatly encouraged by the attitude of the leaders of the British Communist Party, whose general policy with regard to India seems to me to be in keeping with the Indian National Congress."

Subhas Bose gave a good lead to the Congress on all important issues: the attitude towards the Federation and the economic struggles of the workers and peasants, and their role in the national struggle, were well presented, as were the questions of the Indian States, release of political prisoners and so on. But he still pins his faith to "peaceful means" as the weapon of struggle against the Federation and the new Constitution—he visualises the possibility of having to resort to mass civil disobedience which he says "is the ultimate sanction which we have in our hands."

From a perusal of the reported discussions around the main resolutions one is struck by what can only be described as the remarkable restraint of the left-wing in the face of the strong

provocation. An example of such provocation was the attitude of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his reply to the discussion on the resolution relating to the ministerial crisis. Several amendments had been tabled to this resolution, but all had been withdrawn with the exception of one which proposed to delete the portions of the resolution disapproving of hunger strikes for the release by political prisoners.

### **The Ministerial Crisis**

The resolution relating to the ministerial crisis became the main resolution of the Congress. It will be recalled that the circumstances under which the Ministers of United Provinces and Bihar resigned was because of the interference of the Governor-General with their decision to release the remaining political prisoners. The matter was referred by the Provincial Governors to the Governor-General, who refused to sanction the release.

Speaking on the resolution in the Subjects Committee, Vallabhbhai Patel said that the Governor-General had no right to interfere in this question—"This is not Provincial autonomy, but inter-Provincial restrictions"—but he proceeded to show that the Congress Ministers were quite as efficient in operating repressive measures as the British Government. He said, "Did not the Congress Ministers promulgate Section 144 in Cawnpore and Sholapur to tackle the situation there? Whenever there was need for firm action, Congress Governments had not hesitated, and during the last six months they had ruled effectively." The reference here is to the use of repressive measures against the textile strikers of Cawnpore and the textile strikers and peasant movement of Sholapur."

While Jawaharlal Nehru opposed the amendment, he nevertheless struck the right note when he said: "We gave a pledge to secure the release of our political prisoners, I am glad we have *unflinchingly striven to honour our pledges.*"

### **Provocative Speech by Patel**

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, replying to the debate, appeared to be deliberately provocative. He said that those who moved the amendments did not realise the implications of direct action and

added that they had no programme except calling strikes. This brought protests from several parts of the house. Mr. Dutta Mazumdar, member Bengal Legislative Assembly, pointed out that the Congress Socialist Party had decided not to move any amendments in order to show a United Front. Whereupon Mr. Patel retorted: "Bring any number of resolutions; we are ready to face them. Don't you try your direct action here. Let me make it clear we have tolerated you for two years, but the time has come when we shall no longer tolerate you. We shall now pay you back in your own coin". This drew angry shouts from the Congress Socialist and others present.

The main point in the resolution, whilst supporting the action of the Ministers of United Provinces and Bihar, was to confine the crisis to these two provinces. The resolution was passed in the open session. The constitutional crisis ended on February 25 in the United Provinces, where Congress Ministers resumed their portfolios after an agreement on the question of the release of political prisoners was reached between Sir Harry Haig, the Governor, and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier. Similarly in Bihar an agreement was reached on February 27 between Sir Maurice Hallet, the Governor and Babu Shri Krishna Sinha. Both Congress Ministers resumed office on the understanding that the Governors will accept their advice on the release of political prisoners provided each case is examined separately.

### **Indian States Peoples' Resolution**

The Indian States Peoples' Resolution provided the basis for one of the most interesting and important debates of the Congress Session. In relation to the proposed Federation under the new Constitution this question was considered of the utmost importance and occupied the Subjects Committee for five hours in heated discussion. The concern of the delegates was not merely actuated by the importance of the Indian States in relation to the Federation, but at the Calcutta Session last October of All-India Congress Committee a resolution was adopted condemning

repression in Mysore State and supporting the heroic struggle of the people in the State.

Subsequently doubt was raised as to the validity of this resolution. There was opposition in the All-Indian Congress Committee to the resolution and certain Congress leaders, including M. K. Gandhi stated that the Congress had no right to interfere in the affair of Indian States, and was of the opinion that this resolution constituted an interference. It was to clear this up that the question was discussed at Haripura.

The delegates representing various Congress Committees from the Indian States felt and spoke very strongly for the closer relationship between the people struggling in Indian States and those struggling in British India. The Left-wing and Socialist Section of the Congress delegates were of the opinion that the mass struggle, in order to win basic civil liberties and responsible Government, was growing in the States. Further close co-operation was essential between the States people and the people of British India in order to fight the Federation. It was also the duty of the Congress not merely to sympathise with the struggle of the States people, but to fraternise with them and give active assistance in the fight against the autocracy of the Princes.

The original resolution moved by Abul Kalam Azad sought to relieve the Congress of responsibility in connection with the present struggle of the Indian States' people. This was covered by the following point in the resolution:

The Congress, therefore, directs for the present that no Congress Committee be established in Indian States, and that internal struggles of the people of the States be not undertaken in the name of the Congress.

Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking in favour of the resolution, said that the resolution did not go back on the Congress attitude towards the States people. "But the question that had become vital was that they had to face realities and march independently towards their common goal."

### **States' People Appeal for Help**

Speeches were made by all sections of the delegates strongly condemning this resolution. From the delegates coming themselves from Indian States a fervent appeal was made to the Congress not to refuse the States' people help in their hard fight against feudal lords and despotic rulers. One Congress delegate Jayanarian Vyas from Ajmer-Merwara asked the Congress High Command, "Would you take away from us what even autocratic rulers or bureaucratic Imperialism has not dared to take away, namely, our right to be in the Congress?"

Dr. Pattabi, in a fighting speech, exposed the dangers of the Congress adopting the policy which must follow from the resolution of isolating Indian States, and was allowed to move an agreed amendment accepted by Abul Kalam Azad. The amendment deleted the clause opposing the formation of Congress Committees in Indian States, and instead stated:

The Congress, therefore, directs that for the present Congress Committees in States shall function only under the direction and control of the Working Committee, and shall not engage in direct action in the name or under the auspices of the Congress nor undertakes internal struggles of the peoples of the State in the name of the Congress. For this purpose, independent organisations should be started and continued where they exist already within the States.

Dr. Pattabi suggested on the basis of this formula all other amendments should be withdrawn. On this proposition, 11 out of 13 amendments were withdrawn.

The motion on relations between the Congress and Indian States' people was then put and carried.

This resolution represents a retrogressive step; particularly at this juncture, when British Imperialism is making its final plans to introduce the Federal side of the new Constitution, under which one third of the total seats in the Federal Government will be reserved for the despotic Princes, while democratic rights are completely denied the States' subjects. It is just at this stage that full support should have been given to the struggle of the people in the Indian States for democratic rights and civil liberties, and



to carry this through effectively to have planned ways and means of strengthening Congress organisations in the States. The 70 million people in the Indian States must be drawn into the Congress as allies of the Indian people in a common struggle for liberation against British Imperialism and its allies the despotic Princes.

### **Peasant and the Congress**

A striking incident which took place during the Congress was a huge demonstration of peasants which marched through Vithalnagar shouting their peasant slogans, and a great rally was held which was addressed by the peasant leaders. This demonstration was timed to take place just at the moment when the Subjects Committee were to consider the resolution on Peasant Organisation (Kisan Sabhas).

This resolution stated that in view of certain difficulties that had arisen in regard to Kisan Sabhas and other organisations in some parts of India, the Congress desires to clarify the position and state its attitude towards them. The Congress has already fully recognised the right of Kisans to organise themselves in Peasant Unions.

The resolution goes on to state that "while recognising the right of peasants to organise Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any activities of those Congressmen who, as members of Kisan Sabhas, help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy." It then calls upon Provincial Congress Committees to bear this in mind and to take suitable action wherever necessary.

This resolution was put forward because of the apparent fear of the growth of the peasant movement during the past two years. In Bihar alone the peasant movement has a membership of over 600,000 members. The huge peasant demonstrations in each Province has been a prominent feature lately, demonstrations of 20,000 to 50,000 peasants marching to the centres where the Legislative Assemblies meet demanding a reduction of taxation

and debt moratorium. There has been no question at all of those connected with the Kisan Sabhas creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy as the resolution suggests. On the other hand phenomenal growth of the peasant movement has resulted in a definite strengthening of the Congress and the increase in membership can be directly attributed to this.

Very little discussion was allowed on this resolution and when the closure was moved there was considerable disappointment shown by the supporters of the Kisan Sabhas who had come prepared for a stiff fight on this question.

## **Burma**

On the question of Burma the attitude of the Congress was reattested and is defined in a new clause added to the Congress Constitution which was approved by the Subjects Committee. The new clause removes Burma from the Congress Provinces and creates a new "Burma Committee" working for the freedom of the people of Burma. It reads:

There shall be a Congress Committee with power to organise subordinate Committees in accordance with the rules formed by it and approved by the Working Committee. The Burma Congress Committee stands for the freedom of the people of Burma.

Mr. Bose pointed out that the Congress had always recognised Burma as a part of India, and the same policy would be continued.

## **Indian Communists Greet Haripura**

A message of greetings signed by fourteen Indian Communists to the Haripura Session, was broadcast among the delegates at the Congress. It gave a clear and decisive lead on all the important questions which the Congress had to face. It pointed out that the imposition of the Federal scheme on India was an integral part of Britain's war preparations.

It stated that the victory of the Congress at the polls in the teeth of the machinations of the bureaucracy and the opposition of the reactionaries of all shades, marks the beginning of a new period.

The elections were transformed into one gigantic demonstration of national solidarity against Imperialism. Under the initiative of the left—of Socialists and Communists—a movement is developing for creating real mass sanctions behind the Ministers to enable them to implement the Congress programme.

It said, "the session must further definitely take its stand against the tendency to compromise with landlords and capitalists on the issue of peasant and labour legislation, behind the back and against the will of the masses. The attack on the Kisans must be stopped and they must be supported in United Provinces and Bihar and elsewhere."

On the issue of the struggle of the States' people, the decision of the Calcutta A.I.C.C. must be rehabilitated. Without a decisive bid for the leadership of the struggle in the States, the fight against the Federation cannot succeed. "We have decided to combat the Federation by all means in our power. We shall stand for the overthrow of the Constitution, the convening of a Constituent Assembly with the participation of the representatives of the States' people to determine the Constitution of the free and united India; the freedom of all political prisoners; and a charter of the basic economic and political demands of the people, worked out in agreement with the labour and States people's organisations and the representatives of the national minorities."

The main call in the greeting was for the building of a mighty United National Front.

The greeting concluded as follows:

"In the National Congress the masses see the mighty front of struggle against their main enemies—the foreign imperialists and the anti-national capitalists and zamindars. They see in it the organiser and leader of their fights. On the delegates assembled at Haripura rests the heavy responsibility of fulfilling these expectations—of putting a stop to the back-sliding and the retreat of the last year, of shaping the decisions which will be a clarion call to the united forces of our National Front to fall in for the decisive battle."

### **Veteran Congress Leader Sums Up**

Acharya Narendra Deo, a veteran Congress Socialist Party leader, member of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress for the past two years, a member of the Legislative Assembly for the United Provinces and President of the United Provinces Congress Committee sums up the results of the Haripura Session.

This veteran Congress leader considers that one of the most outstanding features of the Haripura Session was the admirable restraint which the left forces within the Congress displayed despite provocation. "The left forces," he said, "permeated by the spirit of the United Front, gathered around the Congress in a moment of crisis; saw the need to close its ranks, to demonstrate their unity in action with the present leadership of the Congress."

"The left is more conscious," he says, "of the necessity of the United Front in action to meet the crisis."

"But whilst the constitutional crisis has now been resolved, we must not forget that constitutional conflicts are bound to arise again and one of these conflicts may become irreconcilable and develop into a first-class struggle. . . . It is the duty of the left to prepare the nation for that eventuality. The left-wing in the Congress has gained enormously in strength and influence in the course of the last two years, but does not fully utilise its new opportunities. The immediate task before the left is to consolidate its forces and establish unity in its ranks on the basis of a plan of united action so that when the call comes we may be able to lead the masses to the decisive battle."

## **Freedom Movement in Hyderabad**

**Mahmud Zaffar Khan**

The political awakening that is sweeping over the Indian States has touched the Nizam's dominions also. This great Indian Principality, lying in the midst of the Deccan Plateau, has remained through all these centuries, one of the last refugees of feudalism in the country. Its Muslim rulers survived the Moghal Empire, and have maintained their sway by dint of shrewd diplomacy and the use of ruthless autocratic power. Treaties made with the British Government recognised the paramountcy of British Imperialism, but the Nizams have been the most stubborn of the Indian Princelings in resisting the encroachments of the British on their State. Thus, right up to the end of the XIX century the Dark Ages prevailed in Hyderabad, and even today the State is exceedingly backward in all spheres of life.

Hyderabad is the largest Indian State after Kashmir — as large, in fact, as Bengal Presidency. Its population of 14½ millions is divided linguistically into three main tongues, Marathi, Telugu and Kanarese, only a tiny minority speaking the official language, Urdu. The two chief religious communities are Hindus and Muslims, 85% of the former to 10% of the latter. There are five large cities, 118 small towns and 21,708 villages. 95% of the people live in the villages and agriculture is naturally the chief means of livelihood.

This briefly describes the geography and ethnology of Hyderabad. When against this background we find that a feudal minority of great landowners has everywhere the reins of power,

the control of finance, education and administration, it is not hard to imagine the terrible plight of the mass of the people.

Modern civilisation has only provided new weapons of oppression for the ruling clique. Education has been used as an instrument to strengthen the ruling Muslim minority, at the expense of the masses, to create cultural barriers between the people, to suppress their languages and best traditions. The result is that today, when a great wave of political consciousness is rising, it is to some extent becoming a movement against a certain community, against a certain culture — a movement against the Muslims and the Urdu language.

This communal tendency has been cleverly exploited by the autocratic rulers, to cover up the cracks in their administration, to canalise unrest into these vicious channels, and to give a genuine popular movement an ugly name.

There is no doubt that there are persons in Hyderabad, as elsewhere, who wish to utilise mass discontent for their own selfish ends. These people spring from the middle-classes and their aim is primarily to secure soft jobs and places of power and privilege in the State. In any assessment of the political situation in the State, therefore, we should not lose sight of this communal factor, for, we shall have constantly to deal with it.

By far the overwhelming majority of the people, however, is disturbed and shaken by long-standing grievances against a corrupt, irresponsible and high handed administration, by grinding poverty and boundless oppression.

### **Absence of Democratic Liberties**

The deep-seated opposition to this regime of landlords and money-lenders is proved by the severity of the laws and the complete suppression of elementary civil liberties. To preserve the administration intact, the Government has persistently refused to grant freedom of Press, Speech or Association, and has looked with suspicion at every activity, private or public, of its citizens. Even places of worships, religious festivals and condolence meetings are carefully watched to see that they do not serve as cover for hostile activities against the Government. Until very

recently permission for all meeting had first to be obtained from the authorities. Commissioners of Police and Collectors were the persons who gave the decisions. In 1929 all political meetings were banned. After a great deal of agitation these rules were somewhat modified, but they did not give real freedom of speech in any way. In 1929, the City Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, was asked in a letter, what was meant by "political". He thought over it for two years, and then wrote:

"The Government have not favoured with an explanation. It will be better, however, if matters be stopped at this."

A pamphlet recently issued, entitled "A peep into Hyderabad" gives a number of instances of arbitrary bans on meeting. We shall quote one or two.

1. A public meeting organised by the Harijan Seva Sangh to celebrate Gandhiji's birthday had to be abandoned, as only 24 hours before the meeting the Secretary was asked to furnish a security for Rs. 2000 and to give an undertaking that the meeting would be in no way political.

2. The Hyderabad public desired to mourn the death of Sjt. G.K. Deodhar, President of the Servants of India Society, and of Pandit Motilal Nehru. They were not permitted to do so.

3. The Bar Association were recently referred permission to invite Sjt. Bulabhai Desai.

New rules were made last July, when meetings were divided into two sorts, (a) Social, educational, literary or charitable, and (b) Other than such. For the latter special permission was necessary. These new rules have in no way relaxed the restrictions on freedom of speech.

Restrictions on freedom of the Press are as severe. Copies of all books, newspapers, etc., printed, have to be filed with the Home Secretary, before publication. Permission to start a press or newspaper has to be obtained from the same authorities and is frequently refused. No anonymous tracts may be published. No news likely to affect public opinion adversely regarding the Government may be printed.

In view of these restrictions, the Telugu, Marathi and Kanarese Press has been completely stifled, and even news papers in English

are carefully censored, many from British India being banned. It is now reported that Hyderabad and other States are making efforts to secure the suppression of news about the States in newspapers in British India, as well. Official agencies, such as the A.P.I., on other hand, are subsidised to the extent of Rs. 3,000 p.m., and special aid is given to loyal Urdu newspapers.

Freedom of Association is restricted to such an extent that even private schools have to receive permission before they can be opened. Many institutions have been closed under these regulations. Similarly strict rules apply to Gymnasiums. Special instructions are issued to officers "to keep the Dominion safe from the poisonous effect of political agitation in British India".

### **A Special Regulation**

To crown all, special Public Safety Regulations have been passed only last September, giving summary powers for arrest and deportation of outsiders, powers to search houses, to force all hotels and restaurants to keep registers of lodgers. Private individuals who house undesirables are also liable for punishment. Any association may be declared unlawful and unlawful activities include:

- (a) Anti-recruitment agitation.
- (b) Boycott of Government Servants.
- (c) Mock funerals.
- (d) Publication of proscribed literature.
- (e) Scare news and false reports amongst the police and military.
- (f) Activities which endanger the good relations between different communities and sections in the State.

The present political structure makes it practically impossible for popular wishes to be made known, or for popular grievances to be set right through "constitutional" channels, since Civil Liberties are totally lacking. The legislative and executive machinery are far removed from popular "contamination". The Legislative Council consists of 21 members, of which 11 members, the President and Vice-President are Officials, 6 are non-Officials and 2 are extra ordinary members. Of the 6 non-Officials, 2 are



Jagirdars, 2 High Court pleaders and 2 are nominated by the Prime Minister. But even so obviously "loyal" an assembly cannot be trusted too far. Its powers are strictly limited and it is kept under the control of the Prime Minister. The Nizam and his Executive Council have the decisive voice in all matters.

### **Political Reforms Enquiry Committee**

The demand for political reforms has been met by the appointment of official Enquiry Committees. There have been several of these, but their recommendations have been shelved, inevitably. Last year, however, in view of the fresh outburst of popular agitation and the rumours of the impending Federation, a new Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur S.A. Iyengar; was appointed to draw up a fresh scheme of responsible Government.

Various organisations in the State have submitted their suggestions before this Committee. Amongst these, the scheme of the State People's Convention is perhaps the most important. This Convention is representative of various sections and shades of opinion and seems to have the general support of the recently formed State Congress, the most progressive organisation in Hyderabad.

The main recommendations of the Convention are:

1. The Nizam to become a Constitutional Monarch, on the model of the British King.
2. A bi-cameral Legislature.
3. An Executive appointed by and responsible to the Ruler.
4. Only 10 per cent of the population to be enfranchised.
5. Special seats for vested interests, as well as an Upper Chamber for them.
6. Local self-government through Municipalities, District Boards and Panchayats.
7. Joint Electorates.
8. An Assembly of 200 and a Council of 65 members.
9. Certain reserved subjects, such as the personal affairs of the Nizam, his relations with the British Emperor, Public Debt,

Military, and External Affairs, to be outside the control of the Legislature.

10. Royal Proclamation of Fundamental Rights, granting:

- (a) Freedom of Speech, Association, Press, Conscience and religious practice,
- (b) Equal rights to all citizens and access to wells and other public places.

The proposals set forth by this Convention are exceedingly moderate. For instance, the Report admits that the property qualification is higher than in Mysore, Travancore or British India. In suggesting a bi-Cameral system, an Executive responsible to the Nizam alone, a very limited franchise, and reserved subjects, the convention has obviously sought to secure the reactionary and vested interests, at the expense of the masses. The scheme, therefore, falls far short of the people's demands.

**But even such mild proposals, even so moderate and respectable an organisation as the State Congress, have thoroughly alarmed the authorities.**

### **State Congress Banned**

Almost immediately after its formation, the State Congress was declared illegal under the new regulations, and its members decided to offer Satyagraha. And now, a regular campaign of repression has been launched in Hyderabad, Aurangabad and other centres. The authorities have consistently tried to make out that the State Congress is a communal organisation, but to its honour, the State Congress has as consistently refuted these slanders, and has taken its stand on the broad popular slogans of responsible Government. It has from the beginning, thrown open its doors to all, irrespective of religion, caste or class.

But the State Congress has to go farther than this. It has to take up the immediate basic political and economic demands of *all* the oppressed people of the State. Its present Nine-Point programme runs as follows:

1. Establishment of Responsible Government under the aegis of the Nizam, and making the executive responsible to the

legislature, which truly represents the subjects of the State on the elective basis.

2. Declaration of the Fundamental Rights such as the Freedom of Speech, Association, Press and Worship.

3. Decommunalisation of Administration, by declaring that the Hindus are entitled to at least 50% representation in the services of the State of all grades in Civil and Military branches.

4. The Ecclesiastical Department should be abolished and Boards set up to supervise and control religious and charitable institutions.

5. Encouragement to the study and use of Provincial languages. Telugu, Marathi, Kanarese, and Hindi, along with Urdu.

6. Judiciary to be separated from the Executive.

7. Compulsory Primary Education in the mother tongues, and reduction on University Education till Primary Education is compulsory.

8. Alteration of Educational policy to appeal alike to all subjects.

9. Tackling the problem of poverty of the peasants in a sympathetic manner by reducing Land Revenue and adopting measures to ameliorate their condition without creating any class-war between the different sections of the subjects.

In this programme emphasis is laid on administrative and educational changes, while only a vague reference is made to the problem of mass poverty. The only way to enlist the broad masses in the struggle is to draw up a clear-cut programme *for them*. It is necessary to point out the close connection between British Imperialism and the reactionary Nizam Government, and to insist on the complete independence of the State people from Imperialism and its feudal and other allies. It is essential for the State Congress to raise its voice against the Haripura decision of the Indian National Congress of Non-Intervention in the States. British Imperialism's attempts to draw Hyderabad into the federal scheme and to use Hyderabad as a military reserve, should make this alliance between the State and British Imperialism clear as daylight.

### **A Platform of Action**

We suggest that the struggle gathering force in Hyderabad be co-ordinated and fought on the basis of the following general programme (which must be further concretised by those on the spot):

1. Complete independence for Hyderabad as well as for the rest of India from British Imperialism and its reactionary allies;
2. Complete freedom of speech press, association and worship;
3. A concrete agrarian programme based on the particular needs of the peasants, on the lines of the national agrarian programme, and including the right to form kisan sabhas. 50% reduction in land revenue, and abolition of debts;
4. A similar concrete programme for workers, including the right to form unions, to strike and picket, and an 8 hour day;
5. Total rejection of the federal scheme and a Constituent National Assembly to draw up a constitution for all-India;
6. Total refusal to co-operate with British Imperialism in any way in her preparations for a new imperialist world-war.

On our side, in British India, we must strive, through the Congress and other political organisations, to draw the struggles of the people together, to resist all attempts to isolate the States, People or bargain with their reactionary rulers for minor concessions. We must see that the storm gathering in the Indian States, in Travancore, Mysore, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Rajkot, etc., draws into its current not an individual Vallabhbhai or a Massani, but the entire Congress, the entire Indian people, for, the States peoples is a lever to the bigger struggle of all India.

## For a Marxist Perspective

**E.M.S. Namboodiripad**

### **1. Evaluation of Indian National Congress**

The Indian National Congress as an organization had a not insignificant place in the emergent anti-imperialist front comprising the left-wing Congressmen and the revolutionary organizations including the Communist Party. But in evaluating the exact place of the Congress, two distinct approaches surfaced in the anti-imperialist front. The Communist Party was the most important organization which represented one of these approaches, while the other approach was represented by the Congress Socialist Party.

Each of these thinkings had its own part to play in determining the direction of the anti-imperialist movement which had developed in strength both before and during the Second World War. Even inside the Communist Party, there were reflections of these two mutually conflicting trends of opinion and it was, in fact, the clash between these two trends within the Communist Party which led to the split in the Party about three decade later.

It may be noted that in the early years of the Communist International, there were similarly two approaches on the question of building the working class revolutionary movement in the colonial countries, including India. M. N. Roy argued that since capitalism was developing in the colonial countries and since the classes representing capitalism were striving to further develop by bringing a rapprochement with colonialism, the task of the Communists in the colonial countries was to fight against the

indigenous bourgeoisie. Opposing Roy's arguments, Lenin asserted in the Colonial Commission of the Second Congress of the International that, although capitalism was developing in the colonial countries and the task of communists in these countries was to organize the working class on a revolutionary basis, colonialism was a burden which had to be borne by all sections of the people including the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the working class as an independent political force should organize the majority of the people, especially the peasants, on a revolutionary basis and, at the same time, make maximum use of the anti-imperialist mentality being expressed by the bourgeoisie.

The peasantry has a vital role to play in bringing this Leninist tactics into practice. Looking from the class point of view, the peasantry is a part of the bourgeoisie, although they are subject to oppression and exploitation by indigenous feudalism and foreign imperialist domination. As the slogan "Land to the Tiller" indicates, they desire to abolish the feudal property rights on land (instrument of production) and to establish the property rights of the peasantry. This desire draws them to the struggle against feudalism and imperialism. Although this struggle is not for socialism, alliance with peasantry would help the working class to earn a powerful ally in its fights against its class enemy. Therefore, communists in the colonial countries should take upon to themselves the task of organizing the rural poor yearning to own a piece of land, under the leadership of the working class.

If the Communists were able to accomplish this task, the working class would be able to rise as a class capable of strengthening the anti-imperialist movement making use of the contradiction between the colonialists and the indigenous bourgeoisie and, at the same time, of exposing effectively and opposing the waverings and treacheries of the bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle. In other word, the working class, standing independent of and working against the bourgeoisie must rise to the leadership of the poor including the peasantry and join hands with the bourgeoisie in the fight against imperialist domination.

From the very outset, the Communists had been working in accordance with this tactics. As part of this, they had succeeded to

a great extent in exposing the bourgeois leaders, including Gandhi, and others holding social democratic views.

However, the Communists committed certain grave errors in the process of putting into practice this tactics which was formulated by the Communist International under the personal leadership of Lenin. The organ of the International, *Inprecor*, wrote in its issue of March 9, 1935 that Indian Communists committed a number of errors on the question of participation in the anti-imperialist struggle and that they took a number of wrong actions. The article pointed out that these were particularly manifest during the struggle of 1930 when new sections of the people were entering in it with petty bourgeois notions, with a tendency to blindly trusting the bourgeoisie. In this situation, Communists should not confine only to giving a call for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Rather, they should enter among the masses waging the struggle and try to draw them to their side. They should bring into practice the revolutionary tactics of united front giving importance to the needs of the anti-imperialist struggle and to its concrete slogans. As a result of the failure in this task, the struggle against national moderatism remained separated from the struggle against imperialism and for the realization of the immediate demands of the worker and peasant masses. Thus, the activities Communists should have conducted among workers who were under the influence of national moderate politics were prevented or remained weak. It also weakened the work they should have undertaken inside the trade unions organised by the moderate leadership. The inability to link the task of occupying the leading position in the people's anti-imperialist struggles with the struggle against national moderatism facilitated the growth of sectarian views and tendencies which were yet to be defeated.

What has been stated above relates to the views and tendencies which had gained strength not only in the Communist Party of India, but in the world communist movement as well. The Seventh Congress of the Communist International gave a powerful call for a struggle against these views and tendencies. Georgi Dimitrov stated in his historic report to the Seventh Congress of the International:

“Sectarianism finds expression *particularly* in overestimating the revolutionization of the masses, in overestimating the speed at which they are abandoning the positions of reformism, in attempts to leap over difficult stages and over-complicated tasks of the movement. Methods of leading the masses have in practice been frequently replaced by the methods of leading a narrow party group. The power of the traditional contacts between the masses and their organizations and leaders had been underestimated, and when the masses did not break off these contacts immediately, the attitudes taken towards them was just as harsh as that adopted towards their reactionary leaders. Tactics and slogans have tended to become stereotyped for all countries, and the special features of the specific conditions in each individual country have been left out of account. The necessity of stubborn struggle in the very midst of the masses themselves to win their confidence has tended to be ignored.....”

Although the Salt *Satyagraha* and other struggles that followed it were devised under the leadership of the bourgeoisie with a feudal-mediaeval outlook, millions of people came forward to participate in these struggles and challenge the imperialist domination. The Communists in those days were engaged themselves in merely exposing the policies and programmes of the bourgeois leaders including Gandhi without participating in these struggles and sharing their bitter experience. The result was that the bourgeois leadership and the people were getting closer to each other. The same *Inprecor* article referred to above pointed out that unless strong actions were taken to wipe out this sectarian disease, Communists would not be able to strengthen their influence on the people and lead the workers, peasants and the urban poor who were turning rapidly towards revolutionary attitude to the path of the revolutionary organizations of a higher form.

Rectifying this error, the Communists were formulating in 1935 a policy of effectively participating in the anti-imperialist struggles led by the Congress. However, with the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party, a non-sectarian, apparently anti-sectarian, trend of thought developed in the anti-imperialist camp. The opinion that the Communist had started rectifying the errors they had been committing hitherto had begun to emerge in the leadership of the



Congress Socialists. To an extent, this created an atmosphere for Communists and Congress Socialists to work together. But, in the midst of these joint activities also surfaced differences in approach between them.

We have noted that it was the Communists who had consistently and uncompromisingly opposed the policies of the bourgeois national leadership including Gandhi and exposed their class character. The emergence of the Congress Socialist Party was an open recognition of the correctness of these criticism and exposure. Among the Congressmen who effectively opposed the Gandhian leadership in the 1934 Bombay session of the Congress and in the AICC meeting that preceded, the Congress Socialists played a highly significant role. In these meetings, Jayaprakash Narayan and other Congress Socialists strongly protested against both the bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism. That was why the Congress leadership looked upon the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party with suspicion and animosity.

As pointed out in the document of the Communist International, a considerable section of the people who entered the movement through the struggles of 1930s came with petty-bourgeois ideas and confidence in the bourgeois leadership. This was true of the Congress Socialist also. In the voice of protest they raised against bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism also contained a tendency of compromise with bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism as well as confidence in the bourgeois leadership. This was evident in the records of the proceedings of the Bombay Conference (October 1934) of the Congress Socialist Party as well as in the very condition set up by the Party that every Congress Socialist must be a Congressman.

The main document adopted by the Conference declared that the aim of the Congress Socialist Party was to get the Indian National Congress adopt socialism as its objective and to transform it into a socialist organization. Basic to the declaration of this objective was the hope that the Congress could be converted into an organization fighting for socialism, just as the Congress had adopted the objective of Full Independence in 1929 after changing the leadership earlier from Tilak to Gandhi. Thus, they thought

that even while strengthening the "class struggle" through trade unions, peasant unions and other mass organizations, the Congress could be used as the platform for the struggle for national independence. It was as part of this strategy that the constitution of the Party made membership in the Congress a condition for eligibility of membership in the Congress Socialist Party.

It can be seen that this is totally devoid of any concept of class-struggle. For them class struggle is an economic struggle conducted through trade unions and other mass organizations. Behind this lay hidden the thinking that class relations have no relevance in the struggle for independence. The Congress Socialist refused to perceive the fact that the bourgeoisie and the working class were in conflict with each other even in the freedom struggle, that the bourgeois political leadership exerted influence not only on the peasantry and other sections of petty-bourgeois elements, but also on the rear section of the working class and that the task of the Communists and Socialists was to rally the masses in the anti-imperialist revolutionary camp through struggles against the influence of the bourgeoisie. They expected that the Indian National Congress, the instrument of struggle of the bourgeoisie and which emerged out of the development of the bourgeoisie, would turn itself into an instrument for the struggle for socialism.

The Communists could not but oppose these views. Exposing the approach of the Congress Socialists of transforming the Congress into a socialist organization, the Communists said that the Congress was the political party of the bourgeoisie and it would be a self-deception and a betrayal of the people to attempt to make it accept socialism. They further pointed out that the task of communists and socialists was to effectively oppose the vacillations and deception of the Congress by organizing the ranks as well as the anti-imperialist elements under its leadership.

In other words, both the policy being pursued by the Communists since 1930 of merely exposing orally the bourgeoisie without joining the struggles led by the bourgeoisie and the policy of the Congress Socialists working with the illusion of turning the Congress into a socialist organization without perceiving the class character of that organization had to be rectified. The concept of

anti-imperialist front was, in fact, a result of the process of this rectification. The Lucknow session of the Congress held in April 1936 was the culmination of this process.

## **II. Background of the Lucknow Session**

Like the Lahore session held in 1929, the Lucknow session of the Congress was a turning point in the history of Indian freedom movement. While the Lahore session adopted the objective of Full Independence under the pressure of Leftists inside and outside the Congress, the Lucknow session adopted a clear anti-imperialist programme to achieve that objective. Significantly, Jawaharlal Nehru who was the President of the Congress at the time of the Lahore session, presided over the Lucknow session. Again, as in the case of his Lahore presidential speech which gave expression to the feelings of the supporters of Full Independence, the presidential speech of Nehru at the Lucknow session gave expression to the feelings of the anti-imperialist revolutionaries, including the Communists and Congress Socialists.

We have noted earlier that, although Nehru was elected President of the Congress for the Lahore session and the period following it, his leftist followers found no place in the Working Committee. But as compared with the Lahore session, the influence of the leftists was demonstrated more strongly in the Lucknow session and this was reflected in the composition of the Working Committee. Thus, out of 15 members elected to the Working Committee, only 10 belonged to the right-wing. Of the remaining five, three were prominent Congress Socialists, viz., Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Achyut Patwardhan. In addition, Subhas Bose who was in prison was also elected to the Working Committee. These four and Jawaharlal Nehru had one way or the other held leftist outlook. Thus for the first time the voice of the leftist began to be heard right inside the leadership of the Congress.

Efforts have been made consciously by some to attribute these political changes to Nehru's personality and to his personal leadership. If one studies only his speeches and articles it is natural that one may get this impression. No one can deny the personal

contributions he had made for the emergence and growth of the anti-imperialist front. However, it would be absurd to maintain that it was because of his contribution alone that the front had emerged. The truth is that even in his absence, the front had begun to emerge, and that it had considerably helped the development of Nehru's personality.

We have made reference in some details to the reorganization of the Communist Party, the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party and the mutual criticism with regard to their policies and approaches to different political issues. Here we shall mention specifically certain significant changes that had come about in the policies of these parties in 1935 as a result of these developments.

As we have noted in the previous section, the Communist Party had been in effect taking the sectarian attitude of opposing the entire Congress without making a discrimination between the bourgeois leadership of the Congress and its ranks. The Communist Party decided to put an end to this and become activists of the Congress in order to draw the ranks of the Congress as well as the common people behind it into the anti-imperialist front.

Almost in the same period, the Congress Socialist Party also made change in its basic outlook and policies. The Party gave up the objective of transforming the Congress into a socialist organization and adopted the outlook of converting it into an anti-imperialist organization. The process of this change in outlook started in the beginning of 1935 (about six months after its first all-India conference) and ended with its Meerut conference in the beginning of 1936.

Even before the Meerut conference of the Congress Socialist Party, the relationship between Socialists and Communists had become one of cooperation which was extended from the work of organizing the left inside the Congress against its right-wing leadership to areas of workers, peasants and students organizations. The political rethinking that took place in the Communist Party before and after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International helped this process. As a result of all this, the second all-India conference of the Congress Socialist Party adopted a new "thesis" setting certain urgent tasks before the Party, such as

unification of all the anti-imperialist forces, joining hands with other leftist forces which stood in the forefront of this work and strengthening the organization of workers, peasants and other sections of the people. These programmes represented the attempt being made to rectify the errors contained in the programmes formulated at the Party's first conference. In addition, the thesis also contained an outlook based on Marxism-Leninism in place of the vague idea of socialism contained in the earlier programme.

However, many socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan were inwardly in disagreement with the general perspective and approach contained in the Meerut Thesis. This disagreement, in fact, led later to intra-party struggles among the Congress Socialists on the one side and to fierce conflicts between that Party and the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the Meerut Thesis was a clear indication to the fact that the Congress Socialist leadership did recognize at least to an extent the changes that were taking place in the international and national politics. Besides, these developments prepared the ground for cooperation between the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party at least for the time being. Immediately before and after the Meerut conference, the General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, Jayaprakash Narayan, and the Communist Party General Secretary, P.C. Joshi, held talks and arrived at an understanding on the question of "transforming the Congress into a national united front".

It must be noted that while these developments were taking place, Nehru was either in prison or he was in Europe in connection with the medical treatment of his ailing wife, Kamala Nehru, preventing him from taking part in active politics. However, these developments did effect certain changes in him. We have already referred earlier to the articles he had written during the short period he was out of the prison in 1933. Nehru said: "I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism...one has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal".<sup>1</sup>

Nehru expressed the same opinion in his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Congress. Earlier, he formed his

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opinion on the basis of information collected through newspapers and journals. But his stay in Europe in 1935 provided him opportunities to study these problems rather closely. There he also got an opportunity to meet and discuss with Ben Bradley who had spent some years in Indian prison in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case and with another British Communist, R. Palme Dutt. S. Gopal, the biographer of Nehru, stated:

He (Nehru) agreed that the Congress was, on the whole moving towards the right, but was himself willing to work in close collaboration with Communists. He was not well read in Marxism but was persuaded of its vitality and emotionally inclined towards it. He also had a deep admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union. Russia was the land of future...Civil liberties to Jawaharlal was of absolute value, and the Communists had to reckon with this.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Nehru desired the kind of economic and social transformations that the Soviet Union was undergoing to take place in India and other countries in the world "without the use of force". He did not accept class struggle, the basic principle of Marxism-Leninism, its logical conclusions of dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

Here one can perceive both the agreement and disagreement between a top ranking Congress leader like Nehru and the Communists. As compared to 1929, Nehru came closer to the Communists. The rise of Fascism and the role played by Communists in the fight against it brought him to take this position. At the same time, he believed that the Congress led by Gandhi was the only organization capable of carrying forward successfully the struggle for India's national independence. Nehru assured Bradley and Dutt that he was prepared to cooperate with the Communist Party, provided the Communists realized this fact and worked accordingly.

Following these talks, an article entitled "The Anti-imperialist People's Front in India" under the joint authorship of Dutt and

Bradley appeared in *Labour Monthly* in March 1936. In the article they stated that although the Congress was the main mass organization of the different sections of people striving for national liberation, it had not yet risen as the united front of the Indian people. The article pointed out that if it had to rise to that position, the constitution, programme and the leadership of the Congress had to change. The article further suggested that the organizations of the workers and peasants and other mass organizations must either be brought into a fighting front associated with the Congress or they must be affiliated to the Congress. At the local, district, provincial and all-India levels, these organizations must be given collective membership and a united fighting organization formed immediately with their participation.

Further, the article also suggested an organizational form in which the ranks would be able to take better initiative in place of the centralized organization with the domination of the Working Committee. That is, there must be democratic centralism, instead of a leadership of the individual.

In sum, the Congress as a whole must be reformed making its function more democratic with better position for the labouring masses. The Dutt-Bradley article also contained suggestions with regard to the Gandhian non-violence and the approach the Congress must take towards the constitutional reforms enacted by the British government.

These were suggestions acceptable not only to the Communists but also to other leftists. Nehru had indicated in his *Autobiography* that the contents of this article were acceptable to him. In any case, he had included the objective and slogans contained in the Dutt-Bradley article in his presidential address at the Lucknow session.

But many of these suggestions turned out to be the target of attack of the right-wing leadership of the Congress and certain others were accepted by them. The spokesmen of the left-wing forcefully argued for those suggestions which were rejected by the right-wing, for which they had the backing of a considerable section of the delegates. However, those suggestions which were opposed by the right-wing were rejected by the session.

There was a significant difference between the situation now and that prevailed in the Bombay session held a year and a half earlier. There was not one leftist leader in the Congress with Nehru's stature in the Bombay session, whereas now the voices of the left were heard right through the presidential address.

One of the reasons for this situation was, of course, the personal contribution made by Nehru. But it would have been impossible for Nehru to take such a clear stand, nor would have been the right-wing leadership compelled to listen to him, had there not been the kind of changes in the international and national politics we have described above.

### **III. Nehru's Marxism and Indian Bourgeoisie**

As we have seen, many thought that Jawaharlal Nehru had been showing leanings towards communism in the early 1930s. In particular, basing on the articles Nehru had written in this period and on his speeches and press interviews, Bipan Chandra stated that the years 1933-36 constituted the period in which he was in "his most 'Marxist' phase".<sup>3</sup>

Bipan Chandra tried to establish that rather than talking vaguely about socialism, Nehru expressed faith in class struggle, the corner stone of Marxism, and emphasized that it was a fact of life and not the creation of some agitators and philosophers. Bipan Chandra also pointed out that Nehru accepted the Marxist theory of state as well as the necessity of revolutionary struggle against this oppressive instrument of the exploiting classes. This was also the period, according to him, in which Nehru's estrangement with the bourgeois ideologies and policies including Gandhism, reached its peak, as evidenced by his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Congress.

We have noted that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders had been endeavouring to negotiate and arrive at a compromise with the Viceroy following the failure of the 1932 struggle. Bipan Chandra has pointed out that in parallel to and as part of these attempts, the Indian industrialist G.D. Birla had

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3. Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru and the capitalist class, 1936, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, 1975, pp.1307-1324.



conducted negotiations with the rulers with the blessings of Gandhi. Birla directly and Gandhi indirectly through Birla had assured the British that Congress, regardless of objections, was prepared to bring into force the constitutional reforms in India. But Nehru and the left-wing Congressmen led by him were opposed to this, Bipan Chandra pointed out.

The main political problem which came up before the Lucknow session was the attitude of Congress towards constitutional reforms. Although the Congress was opposed to the reforms, it did not formulate a programme of boycott of the legislature as it did in the case of the 1919 reforms. The futility of the boycott programme and the subsequent formation of the Swaraj Party earlier had taught the Congressmen including Gandhi a lesson.

Even the left-wing Congressmen who expressed emotional opposition to the adoption of the parliamentary programme by the leadership in 1934 did not demand boycott of elections that were going to be held in accordance with the provisions of the new constitution. Instead, they suggested adopting a policy of obstructionist tactics inside the legislature and organizing agitations outside it.

The question arose if the Congress would go in for forming ministries in the provinces in the event it obtained majority in the legislatures after the elections. The right-wing Congressmen argued that the formation of ministries was the logical extension of participation in the elections. They thought that accepting office would further strengthen the Congress, which would enable them to bargain with the authorities in a better way. However, this policy was forcefully opposed by the left-wing. They feared that if the Congress accepted office, it would lose the character of a fighting organization it had acquired. They also feared that instead of fighting the British imperialism, the Congress ministers, as part of the British administrative machinery, would be compelled to take actions against the people. This opinion was, in fact, expressed by Nehru in his Lucknow presidential address. Nehru stated:

Behind it (acceptance of office) lies, somewhat hidden, the question of independence and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for part reforms under the aegis

of British imperialism. ....To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it, and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation, in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people.<sup>4</sup>

There was a related organizational problem. Nehru supported in his presidential address the leftist proposal to democratize the Congress by giving collective affiliation to the workers' and peasants' and other mass organizations and by assigning active roles to the Congress units at the lowest level and to the ordinary Congressmen. The opposition to the acceptance of office and the proposals for democratization of the Congress constituted a political and organizational challenge to the right-wing leadership. Bipan Chandra points out that Nehru's merit in the period 1933-36 consisted in that he acted as the spokesman of Communists, Socialists and other leftist Congressmen in raising this challenge.

According to Bipan Chandra, it was not an expression of the contradiction between bourgeois ideology and socialism, but a conflict between two approaches in regard to the freedom struggle. He says: "...he (Nehru) challenged the basic nationalist political strategy followed by the Congress leadership since the 1880s — i.e., the strategy of advancing towards political power and independence by stages arrived at through a series of compromises to be forced on the colonial power through the application of ever-increasing political pressure....I have described this strategy as that of Pressure—Compromise—Pressure....."<sup>5</sup>

Bipan Chandra's analysis was as follows: "In the concrete Indian political situation of 1934-36, the dominant Congress leadership and the leadership of the Indian capitalist class felt that the stage of pressure or active struggles was over and the stage of compromise, co-operation and "goodwill" had to be ushered in. They had been quietly working towards a political compromise,

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4. A. M. Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, Vol. 11, New Delhi, Chand and Co, pp.100-101.

5. Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, p.1309.

in fact, since the end of 1933, for the civil disobedience movement had definitely petered out by that time.... Gandhi and dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress strained all their nerves to prevent the Congress from adopting a policy of office-rejection... This was very clearly brought out by the encouragement that Gandhi gave to G.D. Birla to bring about a spirit of mutual trust and “personal touch” between the rulers and the Congress leadership in general and Gandhi in particular.”<sup>6</sup>

Bipan Chandra tries to make it appear that the approach of the spokesman of the leftists, Nehru, was a counter to this tactics of the bourgeoisie. The opposition to the acceptance of office, according to Bipan Chandra, was “in fact” an opposition to the tactics of compromise. The indication here is that Nehru and his associates were trying to adopt a tactics of “pressure—victory” (i.e., uncompromising struggles till the victory is achieved) in place of the “pressure—compromise—pressure” tactics adopted by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders.

The facts, we have presented so far would show that this analysis is basically erroneous. The constantly developing bourgeoisie had been striving to exert more and more pressure on imperialism and to acquire more and more powers making use of this pressure. The adoption of the “extremist” programme under the leadership of Tilak and later of the “non-violent non-cooperation programme” under Gandhi’s leadership by the Congress originally started as a moderate organization were developments that revealed this truth. As indicated in the preceding chapters, it was as part of implementing this same programme that the Congress proceeded along the line of the formation of the Swaraj Party, the initiative taken by the left-wing Congressmen for the adoption of *Purna Swaraj* and the consequent Lahore session, the civil disobedience movement that followed and so on.

It was as part of the same strategy that Nehru’s name was proposed by Gandhi himself as the President of the Lahore session. And he was again made the President at the Lucknow session by Gandhi and the right-wing leadership. As we are going to see in

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6. *Ibid.*

the following pages, the same right-wing leadership extended the presidentship of Nehru for another year and appointed another leader of the left-wing, Subhas Bose to succeed Nehru. It must be mentioned specifically that it was not on account of the pressure from the left-wing, that the right-wing leadership appointed leftists consecutively for three years; it was on its own free will. Why did the leadership make such a choice? In order to find an answer to this question, we would have to establish that the very basis of Bipan Chandra's analysis was wrong.

First, it is not consistent with facts to maintain that the right-wing Congress leadership gave up the strategy of "pressure—compromise—pressure" and adopted exclusively the approach of compromise. It is true that both Gandhi and Birla were moving with an intention of reaching a final compromise. But the bourgeois leadership knew that this was not easy to bring about. They were convinced that a final compromise would be possible only through increasing the pressure.

Second, it is equally wrong to state that the strategy adopted by Nehru was one of "pressure—victory" in place of the strategy of "pressure—compromise—pressure". Although Nehru had often pursued policies which were for the time being opposed to that of the right-wing leadership, his fundamental political outlook (even during 1933-36) was that of the Congress. While opposing the opinions of Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders on various political issues in words, he had always submitted himself in action to the Congress discipline. This was the main factor which motivated the right-wing Congress leaders to nominate Nehru to the presidentship of the Congress now at the Lucknow session as it was in the case of the Lahore session. Bipan Chandra himself has cited certain statements made by Gandhi and Birla which would lend support to this. Let us also note in passing that even during the 1933-36 period in which, according to Bipan Chandra, Nehru had accepted the Marxist theory of class struggle, he looked at the Congress under the bourgeois leadership as the only platform for the struggle against imperialism.

Third, it is advantageous for the pressure tactics of the bourgeoisie to install the leftist Nehru whom they were confident

of “taming” as the president of the Congress and thereby to create the impression that leftist outlook was growing in the organization. In order for the acceptance of office and for the subsequent efforts to become effective, there must have a leadership capable of inspiring and unleashing the left forces in the country. The person best suited for that purpose was Jawaharlal Nehru. The bourgeois leadership was in need of a president with leanings towards Marxism and outwardly opposed to right-wing ideologies including Gandhism. In the absence of such a leftist backing, it would have been impossible for them even to make an attempt for compromise with the rulers.

In his article, Bipan Chandra cites an incident which clearly reveals this fact. A group of Bombay capitalists who were angered at the Lucknow presidential address of Nehru issued a statement sharply condemning him and also criticizing the Congress. Another prominent capitalist of Bombay, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, who did not quite agree with this approach exchanged a number of letters with G.D. Birla on this subject.

The Birla-Thakurdas correspondence revealed what that section of the Indian capitalists who are described as “the more far-sighted” had in mind. It revealed their confidence that no matter what game Nehru played with words, there was no ground for them to get frightened, because Gandhi and other right-wing leaders of the Congress would be able to contain him. The exchange of correspondence also revealed that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders had assured these leading capitalists that the final decision of the Congress with regard to the acceptance of office would go in favour of it regardless of the opposition of Nehru and other left-wing leaders towards it.

In any case, subsequent events have demonstrated the realization of the optimism displayed by Gandhi, Birla and Thakurdas that the bourgeoisie would be able to “tame” Nehru who had been making leftist speeches, and the falsity of the analysis of Bipan Chandra made on the basis of Nehru’s speeches and articles that in the years 1933-36 Nehru had reached “his most ‘Marxist’ phase”. Nehru was a tool of the bourgeois tactics of pressure-compromise—pressure. It was a period in which the Indian bourgeoisie was in need of a leader verbally favouring

Marxism and opposing Gandhism in order for their pressure tactics to succeed.

#### **IV. The Lucknow Session: An Evaluation**

Two principal issues raised by the Congress President Nehru and other leftist Congressmen at the Lucknow session, namely, opposition to the acceptance of office, and actions for democratizing Congress organization including collective affiliation to trade unions and other mass organizations, were not accepted by the Congress.

The issue of acceptance of office was deferred by the session. A resolution adopted by the Congress to this effect stated: "The question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office by Congress members elected to the legislatures under the constitution having been agitated in the country the Congress, in view of the uncertainties of the situation as it may develop, considers it inadvisable to commit itself to any decision at this stage on the question and leaves it to be decided *at the proper time* by the AICC after consulting the provincial Congress Committees."<sup>7</sup>

In deferring a decision on this matter, the Congress was, in effect, rejecting the arguments of the leftists. The issue of acceptance or non-acceptance of office was a fundamental problem relating to the approach towards the British rulers. What lay behind the debate on the acceptance of office was the question whether the Congress would adopt the method of compromise with the British rulers on the basis of the reforms that were being introduced step by step or it would organize the people on a revolutionary basis and establish a free democratic state by the people themselves after victoriously destroying the foundations of the British rule. If it accepted the latter, for which Nehru and other leftist leaders were arguing in the Lucknow session, then the question of taking a decision "at the proper time" as stated in the resolution did not arise. Deferring the decision meant that Congress might take a decision in favour of acceptance of office some time in future (that is, when the situation became favourable).

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7. Zaidi and Zaidi (eds.) *op. cit.*, p 33 (Italics added)

The Congress, on the other hand, rejected outright the issue of democratization of the Congress by giving collective affiliation to trade unions and other mass organizations. The leadership was not prepared to consider this issue. It maintained that the Congress was not against the trade unions and other mass organizations growing in strength and that it was even prepared to take an attitude favourable to their growth. But it insisted that these organizations should be made to accept the leadership of the Congress. For this purpose the Congress would form a workers' sub-committee to give guidance and leadership to those Congressmen working in trade unions.

This was not merely an organizational problem; behind it lay the differences of opinion between left-wing and right-wing on the question of building the anti-imperialist front. By the anti-imperialist front the leftists meant creating a great mass upsurge against the imperialist forces by rallying the masses jointly by the Congress, Congress Socialist and Communist Parties, the trade unions and other mass organizations. On the other hand, the right-wing interpreted the front as the Socialist and Communist parties and the mass organizations like the trade unions strengthening the Congress by accepting its political leadership, thereby regarding the Congress as the anti-imperialist front. Rejecting the proposal put forward by the leftists meant acceptance of the latter interpretation by the Congress.

In sum, although the leftists made a good performance with many major and minor speeches, including the presidential address, all the proposals put forward by them were rejected at the Lucknow session. Some historians have tried to characterize this as a defeat for the leftists. Bipan Chandra, for instance, says: "From now on, the chief role of the masses was to listen to his (Nehru's) speeches. In ideology, not Marxism but a mild form of Fabianism became the norm though once in a while there came flashes of his old Marxism."<sup>8</sup>

Whether this was true or false of Nehru is not relevant now. But what is relevant is the question as to how the leftists in general reacted to these developments. Did they feel that they were

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8. Bipan Chandra, *op. cit.*, p. 1321.

defeated? Did they consider, as Nehru is reported to have felt, that it was futile to fight the right-wing leadership and hence need not continue the fight?

The leftists, except a few like Nehru, did not have any illusion that they would succeed in getting all their proposals accepted by the Congress, that too, in a single conference.

The Communists who regarded that the Congress was the political party of Indian bourgeoisie viewed the fight between the left and right sections in the Congress as an important form of class struggle. They never had the illusion which Nehru and the Congress Socialists had with regard to the political character of the Congress. They knew that the anti-imperialist front would emerge only out of the clashes between the compromising policy of the bourgeois politicians and the uncompromising attitude of the masses rallied behind them. Even the Congress Socialists were working with the understanding that the struggle against the right-wing leadership inside the Congress would be an intense one.

A majority of left-wing Congressmen who belonged to neither of these groups, on the other hand, examined the whole developments from the point of view of whether or not the Lucknow session gave a new impetus to the struggle they had started and not whether or not the struggle they put up on the platform of the session turned out to be effective for the time being. And viewed from this angle, they had sufficient reason to remain contented. Whatever the decision of the Congress session, the proceedings of the session turned out to be useful in taking the issue they had raised jointly with Communists and Socialists to the delegates and the common people. They were able to bring about a change in the thinking of a considerable section of the people who had not yet taken part in the activities of the Communist and Socialist parties or in the left movements. The Lucknow session also helped them to extend to a large section of the people the revolutionary perspective with regard to the constitutional reforms and the practical problems relating to them which had hitherto been confined to narrow groups. In other words, in the Lucknow session they were able to organize to a great extent the leftist forces for the coming struggles between the left and the right.



In order to make use of these favourable situations effectively, certain other activities were also organized outside the conference, which brought far-reaching effect. The "anti-imperialist rally" held during the interval in the conference venue deserves particular mention. The rally which was organised on the initiative of Communists and Socialists attracted a large section of the delegates. The organizers of the rally tried to examine the problems of Indian freedom struggle in the background of international developments, the danger of war that rose in the wake of the rise of Fascism and the role of British imperialism in it. Discussions were held which inspired the ordinary Congressmen to wage a more effective struggle against the right-wing leadership with a clear idea of how to conduct the mass struggles against the Government of India Act which was fabricated by the imperialists rulers and of the weakness of the Congress in conducting such struggles. This helped to lay a strong ideological and political foundation to the anti-imperialist front that the Communists, Socialists and other leftists were striving to build.

The Communist Party also distributed a leaflet at the venue of the conference explaining its stand on various issues. It may be noted that since the party had been banned since 1934, this could not be done openly and legally. Despite this, many Socialist activists and Congress volunteers helped the Communists in distributing the leaflet extensively in the delegate camps and in the conference *Pandal*. A number of leaders in the Reception Committee and AICC also extended cooperation to the Communists in the distribution of the leaflet. The successful anti-imperialist rally and the distribution of the Communist leaflet were indications of the fact that not only certain top Congress leaders like Nehru but a considerable section of the ordinary Congressmen and delegates had started getting attracted to the ideologies of communism and socialism. The ordinary Congressmen who had been fed up with Gandhism, parliamentarism and the waverings and pusillanimity displayed by Nehru who had been indulging in leftist rhetorics were yearning for a new programme and were eagerly looking upon the Communist and Socialist parties which had been giving leadership for taking the national movement in a

new direction. Opportunities were opening up for a fruitful exchange of views among ordinary Congressmen and the representatives of the Communist and Socialist parties as well as for practical cooperation among them.

The emergence of All-India Kisan Sabha was another important event that took place at the venue of the Lucknow session. The grounds for this had, in fact, been cleared earlier. Peasant agitations had been going on for quite some time in different provinces in different forms according to the specific characteristics of each province. In many of these agitations the leadership was with the Congress. Consequently, they did not assume the form of a regular peasants organisation. These were, in fact, attempts to bring the peasant under the Congress.

It was in the early 1930s that peasant organizations began to emerge at local and provincial levels. Even at this stage the leadership of a major section was with the Congress. With the expansion of the activities of the Communist and Socialist parties, the activists of the leftist parties began to take part in the activities among the peasants. For example, it was the left Congressmen who were also the Congress Socialists who laid the foundation for the peasant movement in the Malabar region. With this, workers functioning in the peasant movements began to feel the need of a central organization for the peasant movement like the AITUC for the trade unions. Accordingly, a preparatory conference of the workers in the peasant movements was held in January 1936 at Meerut while the Congress Socialist Party was holding its Second All-India Conference there. The Meerut conference formed an organizing committee with N.G. Ranga and Jayaprakash Narayan as joint convenors to organize an All-India Kisan Conference. The Lucknow conference was a result of the activities of this committee.

The Lucknow conference was attended by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Indulal Yagnik who later became prominent leaders of Indian peasant movement, and N.G. Ranga, a leftist leader who later turned to the rightist camp. The name of the organization formed in that conference was All-India Kisan Congress, also called the All-India Kisan Sangh by some, which was further changed to All-India Kisan Sabha. The Lucknow conference is

regarded as the founding conference of the Sabha.

It may be noted that the All-India Kisan Sabha formed 16 years after the formation of All-India Trade Union Congress. The peasants had hitherto been depending on the Congress not only for the solution of political problems including that of national freedom but also for getting their immediate demands conceded. (This was also the position with workers till the formation of the AITUC.) But the growth of the left parties, the emergence of the anti-imperialist front and the influence it was able to gain even within the Congress exerted considerable influence among the peasants. They began to work with the perspective of forming an independent class organization of their own and fighting against British imperialism by joining hands with all other mass organizations and political parties including the Congress. The All-India Kisan Conference held in Lucknow provided leadership for these activities.

The main resolution adopted by the conference set the objective of the Kisan Congress as complete liberation of peasants from economic exploitation and achievement of economic and political power to peasants, workers and other exploited sections of the people. The resolution stated that the task of Kisan Congress was to organize peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands and to obtain liberation from exploitation. The resolution called upon the peasants to actively participate in the struggles for complete independence for India so as to enable the producing masses to obtain ultimate economic and political power.

The conference adopted two more resolutions which were of considerable importance. One of them demanded abolition of landlordism which had been existing in different forms such as Zemindari, Taluqdari, Malguzari, Estemardari, Khot, Janmi, Inamdari, etc., and conferring landownership on the cultivating peasants. The other resolution demanded radical change in the land tax system in the Ryotwari regions and the introduction of a graduated system of tax, exempting peasants with income less than Rs. 500 from payment of land tax.

These resolutions constituted an outline of the policies of the Kisan Sabha. The conference elected a Central Kisan Committee

with Swami Sahajanand as president and N.G. Ranga as secretary and also an AIKC with larger membership.

Yet another event that took place in the venue of the Congress session was the formation of All-India Progressive Writers' Association for which the inspiration came from the organisation of anti-fascist writers led by Maxim Gorki and other progressive writers in Europe. Formed on the initiative of the Communists, it had the blessings of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Munshi Premchand and other top ranking writers in the country. The Lucknow conference of Indian writers which was presided over by Premchand was an indication to suggest that the message of the anti-imperialist front and the anti-fascist international front had started making impacts on the intelligentsia in India.

All in all, although the Lucknow session of the Congress rejected the resolution introduced by the left-wing, the event that took place inside and outside the conference *Pantdal* demonstrated that the ideas propagated by them had started spreading far and wide. It had also become obvious that Communists and Socialists were leading these movements.

# Tactics of Bourgeois Leadership

**E.M.S. Namboodiripad**

## **I. After the Lucknow Session**

Although there was a similarity between the Lahore and Lucknow sessions of the Congress in that the right-wing leadership decided to install a known leftist as president for both these sessions, the political backgrounds of these decisions were different. The Lahore session was held at a time when even the right-wing leadership had taken a position in which it was impossible to avoid a country-wide mass agitation against the British rulers. In order for them to make this agitation country-wide, they had to secure the whole-hearted co-operation of the leftists. Therefore, not only did they install Nehru as the president of the session, they also took over the slogan of Full Independence raised by leftists represented by him. Thus, both the president of the Lahore session and the decisions taken in that session helped create the impression that politically the Congress was moving towards left.

The background of the Lucknow session was completely different. It had become certain that the immediate objective of the right-wing Congress leadership was to arrive at a compromise with the British rulers and not a struggle against them. For that purpose, they had to have inspiring policy declarations and a suitable president. However, the leadership could not afford to accept the suggestion of the president and the left-wing to reject office, for they would achieve their objective of compromise with the rulers only by making use of favourable situations emerging out of office acceptance. Besides, the proposals put forward by

Excerpts from "A History of Indian Freedom Struggle" written by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. Pages 353-370.

the left-wing (collective affiliation of mass organizations, etc.) for democratizing the Congress organization were regarded extremely dangerous by the right-wing leadership. Consequently, they could not but defeat right in the conference the proposals put forward by the left-wing president. Thus, the right-wing leadership adopted the policy of rejecting all the proposals put forward by Nehru, while keeping him in the presidentship. The state of affairs that prevailed within the Congress leadership as a consequence of these developments had been described by Pattabhi Sitaramayya as follows:

The President was out of tune with the majority of the Working Committee. The three new friends (Congress Socialists) taken into it would, with him make a good four or more than a fourth of the Committee but generally speaking the deliberations and decisions were not conditioned or conducted by majorities and minorities. Jawaharlal had offered his resignation at the very outset but he was persuaded to remain and continue. Continue he did but qualms of conscience which created uneasy feelings in his presidential address which was not meant to be a mere thesis but a programme of action. On the other, there was Gandhi with his following of ten members in the Working Committee thinking and acting as a solid block.<sup>1</sup>

What motivated Nehru to remain a prisoner of the majority in the Working Committee while occupying the presidentship of the Congress? What motivated the right-wing Congress leaders to keep him in the presidentship in such a condition? According to his biographer, Sarvepally Gopal:

By now Jawaharlal was as indispensable to the Congress as the party was to him. He commanded, even before his election tours gave him a wide popular appeal, the support of large sections of radical youth who, but for him, would have left the Congress for left-wing parties. Even the Congress Socialist Party might have broken away from the parent body... . He was, too, the only Indian politician who had an international audience

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1. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p.13.

and it was he who secured for the party recognition on the world stage. Had Jawaharlal, therefore, insisted in the summer of 1936 on resigning the presidency, it is difficult to believe that Gandhi and his followers would have been short-sighted enough to let him do so.<sup>2</sup>

Why did then Nehru submit himself to this situation? His biographer adds:

The psychological hankering to follow Gandhi and the ingrained loyalty to the party were only part of the explanation. Jawaharlal Nehru knew that there was no working class leadership or even an alternative elite leadership available; and as long as this was the case, it would be disastrous to weaken the Congress. And, as ever, his colleagues took advantage of this.<sup>3</sup>

Our discussions in the preceding chapter show that this analysis is incorrect. An alternate leadership in which the working class had active roles had been emerging and getting strong day by day. The Lucknow session had shown that the influence of this emergent alternate leadership was by no means small. The truth was that other than making policy statements like the Lucknow presidential speech Nehru was not prepared to put up an uncompromising fight against the views of the right-wing in accordance with the contents of his declarations.

As S. Gopal has pointed out, Nehru's views were full of contradictions and his political outlook weak. His seemingly Marxist philosophical outlook and his leanings towards the political slogans of the anti-imperialist front that included communists and socialists were found reflected throughout in his speeches and writings. However, his actions were limited within the ambit of discipline of the Congress led by the bourgeoisie.

As we are going to see in the following pages, whenever the contradiction between the left-wing and the right-wing became acute, Nehru either gave up his own position and surrendered to the right-wing leadership, or remained neutral. Never did he stand firm with the left-wing to effectively challenge the right-wing.

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2. S. Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

3. *Ibid.*

However, a few weeks after the Lucknow session, Nehru came in clash with the right-wing leadership of the Congress. Although the proposals he had put forward in his presidential address had been rejected by the Congress, he continued to make speeches and write articles which resembled in content his presidential address.

Not only the capitalists of Bombay as we have noted earlier, but many right-wing Congress leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari severely criticized him for the opinions he expressed. Following, Nehru offered his resignation, an action which was disapproved by Gandhi who advised him to submit to the majority of the Working Committee and work without creating problems. The right-wing leadership in the Congress and the moderates outside it stood witness to Nehru's acceptance of Gandhi's advice and to the disappearance from his speeches and writings of the "triumphant freshness" which had been found expressed in them earlier.

This process of change in Nehru reached the zenith as preparations began for contesting the elections scheduled to be held in early 1937. We shall return to it in the following chapters. Before that we shall refer to certain activities of Nehru to which the right-wing leadership had no objection.

By 1936 the world political atmosphere was becoming dark. Abyssinia became the victim of aggression of Fascist Italy. In Spain, rebellion broke out under the leadership of Franco against the elected government. Added to these were the inhuman regime of Hitler who had already come to power in Germany and Japan's war of aggression against China, which together gave rise to people's ire against imperialist powers which were rendering assistance to the Fascist forces around the world.

This had its reflection in India also. The Congress Working Committee decided to observe 9th May as "Abyssinia Day". The Working Committee also deputed V.K. Krishna Menon to represent the Congress in the World Peace Conference scheduled to be held in Brussels in September 1936, and in the World Peace Congress which were organised jointly by the socialists, communists and certain sections of bourgeois political parties in Europe. And it



was as part of these activities that Nehru visited Spain and sent aids to the Spanish democrats.

Nehru considered that this was the symbol of the leftist views he was representing. The right-wing leadership thought this would help, like many other things, to create popular pressure which was needed to achieve the objective of compromise with the British rulers, because any move against Fascism would also turn against the British rulers. The message sent by Nehru to the World Peace Congress stated:

... I should like to emphasize that peace in colonial countries can only be established with the removal of imperialist domination for imperialism is itself a negation of peace. Therefore, for us in India, as well as for other countries, situated like us, the first step must be political freedom, to be followed, I hope, by social freedom. Thus we shall be able to build up our country, in common with the rest of the world, an enduring foundation for peace and freedom and human progress.<sup>4</sup>

In order to rouse world public opinion and fight for civil liberties in India, a Civil Liberties Union was formed on Nehru's initiative. The Union endeavoured to collect information on the violation of civil liberties in foreign countries and also to provide similar information on the violation of civil liberties in India to foreigners. According to the official historian of the Congress, Pattachi Sitaramayya:

In India...where no rights exist for the people, when the so-called constitution itself is undemocratic and is a standing negation of civil rights and popular liberties, a Union such as the one contemplated would be more or less an imitation unless it super-arrogated itself the whole range of stupendous task undertaken and carried on with success by Indian National Congress for over half a century. For the Civil Liberties Union that is contemplated should in any case of India strive to *establish* civil liberties in the first place, not merely *preserve* them as in the case of France, America and England. But one justification we can sense instantly and instinctively. The Union that was

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4. *Collected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 7, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1975, p. 577.

being established in 1936 might form the nucleus of that larger union which must necessarily function even after India shall have established a full democratic constitution.<sup>5</sup>

We have referred earlier to Nehru's opinion on the communist approach to civil liberties. Nehru considered civil liberties as a set of values which had to be unconditionally preserved always and everywhere and declared that he was opposed to violation of civil liberties to introduce revolutionary change in the economic and social life as in the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Civil Liberties Union formed under the leadership of Nehru was meant to serve the dual purpose of opposing the repressive actions of the British rulers in India and laying the foundation of future Indian democracy.

Thus, the right-wing Congress leaders left Nehru free to work in the areas of Fascist aggression and preparation for war at the international level and against the violation of civil liberties at the national level with which they had no quarrel, while preserving their domination over the Congress organization.

## **II. Preparations for Elections**

For those who retain in memory the fact that it was on the slogan of boycott of legislature and other institutions that Gandhi brought the masses to the battle ground, it may appear surprising to see the Congress making preparations for elections without ruling out the probability of accepting office after winning the elections. But no one who examines objectively the growth of the bourgeoisie which controlled the Congress politically and organizationally would find anything surprising in it.

The bourgeois political leadership came to the fore with a programme of agitations and struggles first under Tilak's leadership and later under Gandhi's when it was felt necessary to mobilize the people discarding the style of work of the earlier generation of moderates. And it was the same leadership which gained self-confidence through the struggle for over a decade came to the conclusion that it was possible to negotiate and reach

5. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

compromise with the rulers without giving up the programme of rallying the masses behind itself.

While this was the position with the right-wing leadership, the leftists did not favour the approach of boycotting elections either. They understood that elections and battles in the legislature had an important place in organizing the people against imperialism and its Indian agents. As Lenin pointed out in the midst of a controversy in the world communist movement on the same issue, the argument against parliamentary activities was an 'infantile disorder' that had affected the revolutionary movement. The world revolutionary working class movement rejected both the right opportunist view of the possibility of bringing revolution by contesting elections and using parliamentary majority and the left opportunism keeping aloof from class-struggles on the scene of parliamentary activities. The Communist Party which had been organized on the basis of this ideological position, and the Congress Socialist Party viewed the electoral activities as an important means to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle. However, the Communists, Congress Socialists and other leftists differed from the right-wing leadership including Gandhi on the question of why and how to participate in the elections. The leftists were opposed to the right-wing approach of entering the legislatures and forming ministries wherever there was a majority strictly in conformity with the provisions of the constitution and using the authority and power thus acquired to bargain with the imperialist rulers. They, on the other hand, tried to create a revolutionary mass movement by combining the majority in the legislature with people's force outside the legislature. They adopted the approach of "wrecking the constitution" with popular force and framing a constitution for India by a constituent assembly which would be constituted by the people in the process of this struggle.

On that basis and as an integral part of the process of "wrecking the constitution", the Communist and Socialist Parties were pondering independently and collectively how best the election propaganda could be used, what were the policies and programmes needed for building the anti-imperialist front and how to propagate the programmes of these parties independently while propagating

the common programmes of the front and so on. The right-wing Congress leadership, the leftist Congress president and his socialist colleagues in the Working Committee also paid attention to these problems.

As a result of the discussions that took place at different levels, the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party and other leftist parties adopted their respective programmes which, however, failed to create any impact on the masses. The election manifesto of the Congress, on the other hand, attracted the people. The election propaganda conducted by the Congress leaders in general and Nehru in particular based on the manifesto, despite the constraints placed by the right-wing leadership, helped the spread of the anti-imperialist views represented by Nehru among the people.

The nature and character of Congress leadership was, in fact, reflected in its election manifesto. For instance, although the right-wing leaders had already decided to form ministries wherever the Congress won a majority in the elections, the manifesto remained silent on the subject. On the other hand, it contained an inspiring call for anti-imperialist struggles.

The Congress election manifesto was written by Nehru as it was the case with many other documents which had become beneficial to the right-wing in the Congress. Therefore it would sound to the people under the influence of the leftists that it embodied their hopes and aspirations. Moreover, Nehru conducted the election propaganda in such a way as to strengthen this impression. But the question of forming ministries was left open in the manifesto.

The manifesto began with a description of the deepening economic crisis and the problems of increasing unemployment and poverty. It reiterated that the only condition for the solution of these problems is the attainment of independence. It emphasized the fact that the struggle for independence had ended up in the suppression of civil liberties. The manifesto specifically stated that the Congress had rejected the constitution prepared in these backgrounds and that the activities inside the legislature was one of the facets of the struggle to get it rescinded.

What was the nature of activities contemplated in the legislature? Were they intended to "wreck the constitution" as proposed by the left-wing or to prepare the ground for a compromise with the British rulers? These questions were not answered in the manifesto. The contents of the manifesto were so vague that they could be interpreted in either way. At the same time, it repeated the contents of the resolution on civil rights adopted in the Karachi session of the Congress. Besides, an appendix containing certain proposals for the solution of the agrarian problems raised following the emergence of the Kisan Sabha was added to the manifesto.

In short, the Congress election manifesto contained an approach which, while providing facilities to the leftists to conduct propaganda in accordance with their own views, was helpful to the right-wing to take an "appropriate decision" after the elections with the support of the people attracted by the leftist countenance of the manifesto.

Based on the manifesto, Jawaharlal Nehru conducted a country-wide propaganda campaign in the capacity of president of the Congress. The campaign was organised on the model of country-wide tours conducted by Gandhi in 1921-22 and in the subsequent years. But unlike Gandhi, Nehru endeavoured to spread the message of the left-oriented anti-imperialist front throughout the country. In the tour Nehru proved that he was as good to draw crowds as Gandhi was.

The election campaign tours also showed that in popularity Nehru was next only to Gandhi. However, more important was the change that had come about in the nature of the Congress and the anti-imperialist movement. The idea of uncompromising struggles against imperialism as demanded by Communists, Socialists and other leftists, the organisations of workers, peasants and other working masses as an integral part of these struggles, the communist and socialist ideologies that helped and strengthened those who were working in these organisations, and above all, the close link between the Indian freedom struggle and the revolutionary movements all over the world—all these were brought closer to the masses by Nehru through his election campaign.

In the background, however, certain other developments were taking place. The right-wing leadership which assigned Nehru the work of writing an election manifesto capable of inspiring millions of left-minded youth and the working masses as well as the task of conducting a country-wide election campaign basing on the manifesto was striving to win the elections by all means including reaching an electoral understanding with the moderate sections outside the Congress.

This was the approach which Nehru had sharply criticized earlier. He accused the majority of Congress leaders of moving in the direction of aligning with anyone adopting any method with the sole objective of winning the elections. However, Nehru himself played later in the hands of the right-wing in creating situations for gaining majority and forming ministries in the non-Muslim majority provinces. For instance, his biographer points out that "within a few days he (Nehru) began negotiations with Pandit Malaviya, whose outlook in politics was frankly communal for an electoral alliance with his Nationalist party".<sup>6</sup>

However compromising Nehru might have been with the right-wing leaders at the high level, ordinary Congressmen, Congress Socialists, Communists and other leftists were striving at strengthening the left-oriented anti-imperialist front which found expression in the Lucknow session and in the subsequent election campaign. The Kisan Sabha had been gaining strength day by day. In accordance with the decision of the Lucknow conference, 1st September was observed as All-India Kisan Day and a charter of demands was adopted incorporating the immediate demands of the peasantry. Many Kisan Jatha were led from different parts of Maharashtra to Faizpur where the Congress was holding its fiftieth session, demanding correction in the programme of the Congress in the light of the charter of demands. Partly on account of this, the Faizpur session adopted an agrarian programme to be added to the election manifesto as an appendix.

Besides working in trade unions and the Kisan Sabha, efforts were also made by the leftists to organize a student movement. It

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6. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*; Vol. I, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1976, pp. 208-209.

may be noted that the All-India Students Federation was founded in the intervening period between the Lucknow and Faizpur sessions of the Congress. It was also in the same period that people's struggles began to emerge in the princely states against autocratic rule and for responsible governments.

The Students Federation was founded on the initiative taken by the leftist parties. Therefore, in the outlook as well as in the policies and programmes of that organization could be found the general anti-imperialist views and also the influence of socialist and communist ideologies. The situation in the people's movements in the princely states was, however, different. Along with Communists and Socialists, Congress sympathizers and bourgeois nationalists were also taking part in these movements. However, like the mass movements and organizations led by the leftists, this turned out to be a challenge to the right-wing leaders including Gandhi.

As we have seen earlier, because of the policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states" pursued by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders, the Congress had never come forward to actively support the democratic struggles of the people in these states. The leftists in the Congress were too weak to get this policy reversed. However, in response to the developments that began with the Round-Table Conferences and the reforms proposals that emerged in the Conferences, a section of non-leftist bourgeois nationalists emerged in the princely states. Agitations for responsible government were organised under their leadership compelling even the rightist Congressmen to take part in them. These agitations gave rise to political organisations of the subject people in the various princely states.

The leftists made significant contributions to the growth of these new movements. The influence of the leftists in Travancore, Cochin, Hyderabad and several other states was undeniable. The political experience of many non-left democrats in the course of the movements turned them to the left. Even a large section of bourgeois democrats who thus turned to the left had to clash with the right-wing Congress leadership at least on questions relating to the movements in the princely states.

Thus, it can be seen that while the right-wing Congress leadership was engaged in the selection of candidates and in other activities for winning the elections, the leftists were utilizing the election campaign politically and organizationally to further strengthen the anti-imperialist mass movement.

### **III. The Faizpur Session**

In less than a year after the Lucknow session the next session of the Congress was held in December 1936 in Faizpur, an obscure village in Maharashtra.

Holding a Congress session in a rural area was contrary to the tradition of the Congress since 1885 when it started holding annual sessions regularly. The sessions held in the past 16 years during which the Congress led directly by Gandhi was considered an organisation identified with the peasant masses were no exception. For the first-time the Congress was now holding its session in a backward village with entirely rural amenities.

The Faizpur session was noteworthy in another respect also. For the first-time, again a person, particularly one who was known to hold differences with the majority in the leadership, was presiding over the session for a second time in succession. Jawaharlal Nehru who had declared himself in the previous Lucknow presidential address to be holding views that were different from those of Gandhi and other right-wing leaders presided over the Faizpur session.

In a sense this was an indication of the growing influence of the left forces in the Congress. But the election of Nehru to the presidency was not the result of a leftist victory over the right-wing; rather, the election took place in a manner which showed that the differences between the two wings in the organization were becoming sharper. As with the earlier Lahore and Lucknow sessions, Nehru's name was proposed for the presidency for the Faizpur session by Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. As soon as the decision of the leadership was announced, Nehru issued a statement saying, "I shall welcome the election of any of my colleagues and co-operate with him in another capacity in the great enterprise we have undertaken. Should, however, the choice of



my countrymen fall on me, I dare not say 'no' to it. I shall submit to their pleasure. But before they so decide they must realise fully what I stand for, what thoughts move me, what the springs of actions are for me in speech and writing. I have given enough indication of this and from this I wanted to be judged."<sup>7</sup>

Vallabhbhai Patel was nominated to the presidentship as the representative of the right-wing. Withdrawing from the contest Patel said in a statement:

My withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlalji stands for. Indeed Congressmen know that on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlalji.<sup>8</sup>

The statement added:

The question of 'holding office' is not a live issue today. But I can visualize an occasion when acceptance of office may be desirable to achieve the common purpose. There may then be a sharp division of opinion between Jawaharlalji and myself or rather among Congressmen. We know Jawaharlalji to be too loyal to the Congress to disregard the decision of the majority, assuming that the latter lays down a policy repugnant to him... The Congress President has no dictatorial powers. He is the chairman of our well-built organisation. He regulates the proceedings and carries out the decisions of the Congress as they may be arrived from time to time. The Congress does not part with its ample powers by electing any individual no matter who he is.<sup>9</sup>

That is, Patel's statement withdrawing his own candidature was a clear indication of the fact that the right-wing leadership had already gained enough confidence of "taming" Nehru. As we have shown earlier, Nehru acted after the Lucknow session in a manner helpful to this. Rajagopalachari in a letter to Gandhi stated that he was "charmed" by this change in Nehru. Patel also spoke highly of Nehru in a letter to Gandhi. He stated: "We found not the slightest difficulty in co-operating with him and adjusting ourselves

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7. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

8. *Ibid*, p. 32.

9. *Ibid*, p. 32.

to his views on certain points. I have an impression that he is also satisfied." Quoting these two letters, Nehru's biographer states:

Whether, as claimed, Jawaharlal was equally satisfied is doubtful. But he made no public grievance of the clipping of his wings. If he realized that, though he was president, he was being steadily forced to continue the retreat which had begun at Lucknow, he did not disclose it even to his closest friends and threw all his energies into the winning of the elections.<sup>10</sup>

In any case in Nehru's rejoinder to Patel's statement he had assured that he would strive to loyally implement the Congress decisions whatever his own opinion on them. He agreed that his re-nomination to the Congress presidentship was not a recognition to his ideologies, but that it was a general recognition of his actions as president of the Congress for the past eight months. He reiterated that irrespective of whether he was elected to the presidentship or not, he would loyally abide by the decisions of the Congress.

In short, the strategy of the right-wing to "tame" him to the presidency had been successful. As desired by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders as well as by Birla and other capitalists, they had got a Congress president now who would be ready to loyally implement even a decision to accept office that the Congress might take in future. On the other side, his presidency would attract the left-minded youth and the labouring masses to the Congress. What we find in the statement of Patel is the self-confidence arising out of this calculation. In other words, what we indicated at the Faizpur session was not merely the surge of the left forces as thought of by many, but also the skillful tactics of the right-wing leadership of maximally utilizing the advancing left forces to serve its own class interests.

It must be noted that all these developments took place at a time when the left movement in general and the socialist-communists forces in particular were able to make significant advances. Explaining the background of the Faizpur session, the official historian of the Congress, Patabhi Sitaramayya, has dealt

10. S. Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

at length with the new constitution adopted by the Soviet Union a month before the Faizpur session.

It was on the 25th November 1936 just a month prior to the Faizpur session of the Congress that in the great Kremlin Palace 2040 delegates gathered to discuss and adopt the New Constitution of the U.S.S.R. It was the embodiment of, even as it was the testimony to, the economic and political, the cultural and social progress achieved, particularly during the previous twelve years. In one bound, what was purely an agricultural State in the world was transformed into one of the most advanced powers of the world where industries flourished commensurately with agriculture, organized according to modern technique. The New Constitution introduced a new era and a new organisation of the State.<sup>11</sup>

Sitaramayya added that it was no wonder that at Faizpur the atmosphere was surcharged with socialist slogans, emphasizing the rights of workers and peasants on the one hand and declaiming against the forces of Imperialism and Fascism on the other. As an evidence to this he cites the resolution introduced by the Congress Socialist Party at the Subjects Committee which stated that "the Congress declares the solidarity of Indian people with the enslaved peoples of the world, whether the colonial or the so-called 'Sovereign' states and with the people of U.S.S.R."

Apart from introducing this resolution, the socialists, communists and other left-wing sections also used the conference venue for free political activities. The organisation of the *Kisan jatha* which was mentioned earlier was part of these activities. The *jatha* was received by the Congress president Nehru and the chairman of the Reception Committee, Shankar Rao Deo, when it reached the conference venue. Greeting the members of the *jatha* on behalf of the Congress, Nehru congratulated them for the work they did in the villages along their way.

Presiding over the Kisan Conference, N.G. Ranga felicitated Nehru on behalf of the Kisan Congress and on his own behalf for his election to the Congress presidentship for a second term.

11. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

Expressing satisfaction at the performance of Nehru, Ranga hoped that he would introduce the necessary provisions to give representation to the *kisans* in all the elected bodies of the Congress.

Conferences and committee meetings of the Congress Socialist Party and many other anti-imperialist organisations were also held in the venue of the Faizpur session. The conference provided opportunities for the different groups and organisations of leftists to exchange views among themselves and to propagate views of these groups and organisations among the Congress delegates. As was the case with the Lucknow session, the activities carried out outside the Congress session were broader and more successful than the resolutions adopted formally in the Congress session. However, what attracted the attention of the people inside and outside the session was the spirited debates that took place on the platform of the session. And these debates were centered round the questions of elections and the future course of action.

As was the case in the Lucknow session, the right-wing Congress leaders were not prepared to take a clear and final decision on the question of office acceptance. In view of their objectives, taking a decision in favour of office acceptance in the prevailing situation was inopportune. If they took a decision against office acceptance as demanded by the leftists, it would be impossible for them to change the decision later. Besides, at a time when it was necessary to earn the support of a majority of the voters by inspiring the entire people through a massive propaganda against the constitution, it would be unwise to divide the Congress by taking a decision either in favour of or against office acceptance. A decision on the question of office acceptance at that stage would create problems in starting negotiations with the British authorities even after securing a majority in the elections on the same question. These were the considerations that motivated the leadership to defer the decision once again.

As noted earlier, the demand for constituting a Constituent Assembly by Indians themselves after removing the British from power was part of the agitations against the constitutional reforms proposed by the British. How such a Constituent Assembly would be formed? What are the conditions necessary for its formation

and how these conditions would be brought into force?—these were the questions that came up for lively discussions in which the right and the left-wings came to clash with each other. Finally the conference decided under pressure from the right-wing leadership to hold a convention comprising the members elected to the Central and Provincial legislatures, members of the AICC and others who might be invited by the Congress Working Committee and constitute a constitution making body.

This was a move made by the right-wing leadership to get their policy relating to the Constituent Assembly accepted by the Congress as was the case with the question of acceptance of office. It was their intention to reduce the constitution making to a convention and destroy its revolutionary character.

In sum, as in the case of the Lucknow session, the Faizpur session ended in a manner in which the right-wing leadership could claim victory. However, the activities conducted by the leftists outside the conference *Pantal* and the propaganda carried out inside the *Pantal* showed the organised character of the leftists. The *Kisan* rally organised by the re-organised Communist Party which had been in a state of disorganisation until the last three years, together with the Congress Socialist Party which was formed just two years ago and other left forces was an indication of the growing strength of the left. Although Nehru had been “tamed” according to the deliberate plans of the right-wing leadership, the leftist movement claimed to be represented by Nehru was surging ahead without being amenable to be tamed or destroyed.

A related event was the appearance of M. N. Roy in public. Roy who had reached India through illegal means after being expelled from the Communist International and formed what was called the “Royist Group” was subsequently arrested and had been released just before the Faizpur session after a long period of imprisonment. He was naturally recognised as one of the leaders of the left. Nehru in his presidential address had extended welcome to Roy. He was one of the leaders who were present to receive the *Kisan jatha*.

However, right in the Faizpur session Roy had started taking an attitude of leaving the left camp and helping the right-wing

leadership directly or indirectly. It may be recalled that Roy had argued that the Indian bourgeoisie had completely fallen in line with the reactionary forces in contradistinction to the Marxist analysis made by Lenin in the Communist International. As a result of the re-thinking he had done after reaching India following his expulsion from the Communist International, Roy had begun to transform himself as the founder leader of a new "radical movement" within the framework of the bourgeois leadership, giving up the idea of independent leadership of the working class. Although this change in him had not taken its full form in the Faizpur session, its beginning could have been discerned at that stage.

#### **IV. The Elections and After**

In accordance with the provisions of the Reforms Act of 1935, elections to the provincial legislatures were held a few weeks after the Faizpur session. The elections were politically significant in many respects. It was for the first-time in the political history of India that such a massive electorate was participating in an election. Any one who paid a certain minimum amount to the Government as tax or one who was a literate had now the right to vote. The names of about 35 million voters satisfying these qualifications would appear in the electoral list.

Besides, any party winning a majority of seats could form a Government at the provincial level and carry on administration on a wide range of subjects. In other words, an unprecedentedly large section of the population had now obtained the right and opportunity to decide who or which party should handle the administrative machinery in the near future, although the administration was confined to the province. Both the right and the left-wings in the Congress had been striving, from their respective stand-points, to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement making use of this right and opportunity.

At the same time, the new constitution was one of placing obstructions before the anti-imperialists striving to win the objective of expelling the British from power and establishing

people's Governments at all levels. Even in the provincial sector in which powers had been transferred to people's representatives, special powers were vested in the Governor. At the Centre, the hold of the British authorities remained as before and provisions had been made in the new constitution, which were suited to serve this purpose.

In the circumstances, the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations were participating in the elections to the provincial legislature not to "bring into force creatively" the provisions of provincial autonomy contained in the constitution, but to "combat" and destroy the whole constitution, particularly the federal system contained in it. That is, the anti-imperialists including the Congress were conducting the election campaign as part of the activities, to rally the masses on a wide scale in the struggle to reject the very constitution based on which the elections were being held.

As distinct from this, certain parties and organizations adopting a "creative" approach towards at least the provisions of provincial autonomy in the constitution appeared on the election scene. The Justice Party in the province of Madras, the Independent Labour Party led by B.R. Ambedkar in Bombay and Central Provinces, the National Agricultural Party of Zamindars and landlords in U.P., its counterpart in Punjab, called the Unionist Party and the Krishak Praja Party led by Fazlul Huq in Bengal were prominent among such parties. These were in addition to the communal parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League.

The British rulers came forward to encourage and assist each of these parties and individuals not affiliated to any of them. Thus, the candidates of these and similar other parties and groups as well as independents entered the election field opposing the candidates of the anti-imperialist front represented by the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations, although the latter were not contesting the elections under a unified leadership or based on a common programme acceptable to them.

The question of the approach towards the constitution prepared by the British government became a lively issue before 35 million strong electorate. The election became a platform of conflict

between two large camps; one comprising all the anti-imperialist forces which, though divided between the left and the right-wings, were fighting against the constitution and striving to draw the entire people in that fight, and the other made up of the different political groups which, though based on different programmes, were opposed to the anti-imperialist front and for that reason receiving overt and covert assistance from the British rulers. In the election battle between these two camps the British authorities took certain actions against the anti-imperialist camp and in favour of the camp which was opposed to it. Even while the election campaigns were in progress, thousands of political prisoners, including the Congress Working Committee member, Subhas Bose, were languishing in the prisons all over the country. Although Abdul Gaffar Khan was set free, he was expelled from his home province. The anti-imperialist camp had to face all these obstructions and other kinds of repressive actions by the governments in conducting the election campaign.

Nevertheless, the Congress secured an absolute majority in five provinces of Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In Bombay it reached very close to a majority and in Bengal, Assam and NWF Province it became the biggest single party in the legislatures. Only in Punjab and Sind did the Congress turn up as a minority party. The total number of seats in all the 11 provinces was 1585 out of which the Congress won 715 seats. It must be specifically stated that the Congress contested mainly in the general seats. The total number of seats reserved for Muslims in the assemblies was 482. The Congress contested 58 seats and won 26. Similarly, the Congress contested 20 seats out of a total number of 38 reserved for labour and won 18 seats. The total number of seats reserved for landholders was 37 out of which it contested 8 seats and won 4. Of the total number of 56 seats reserved for industries and commerce, the Congress contested 8 seats and won 3.

It can be seen that the Congress victory was confined largely to the general constituencies and that its performance in the reserved constituencies was rather poor. It contested only a few seats in the



reserved constituencies and won still a lesser number of seats. But, it is worth-noticing that among the reserved constituencies, only in the constituencies reserved for labour the Congress was able to contest and win a comparatively high number of seats.

It is also significant to note that there was not one single political party to contest seats reserved for Muslims comparable in proportion to the number of seats the Congress had contested in the general constituencies. The Muslim League contested only 123 seats out of a total number of 482 seats reserved for Muslims. A majority of Muslim seats were shared by the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and by unattached independents.

The elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937 in a way reflected, in general, the political situation prevailing then in India. Victory of the Congress in the general constituencies on one side, and its defeat in the constituencies reserved for religious minorities, including the Muslims, the depressed and backward communities and for other special interests, but a stronger support in the seats reserved for labour on the other—this was the picture that emerged. At the same time, there was no political organization to challenge the Congress at the all-India level.

As soon as the elections were over, the question on the future course of action arose before the Congress. An important aspect of this question was office acceptance. Questions also arose as to what the elected Congress members should do inside and outside the legislatures and how should they behave and with what perspective. These and several other problems of similar nature had to be resolved. Needless to say, on each such problem the left and the right clashed with each other. Finally, the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha in February-March 1937 adopted a resolution, the major features of which are as follows:

1. The Congress has entered the legislatures not to co-operate with the new constitution or the government but to combat the Act and the policy underlying it. The Congress adheres to its general and basic policy of non-cooperation with the apparatus of British imperialism except in so far as circumstances may require a variation.

2. The objective of the Congress is Purna Swaraj and to that end all its activities are directed. The Congress stands for a genuine democratic state and such a state can only be created by the Indian people themselves through a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise, which can only come into existence when the Indian people have developed sufficient power and sanctions to shape their destiny without external interference.

3. The immediate objective of the Congress in the legislatures is to fight the new constitution—particularly the federal part of it—and to lay stress on the nation's demand for a constituent assembly. Congress members have been directed to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new Assemblies this demand for a Constituent Assembly, and to support it by mass agitation outside.

4. The Congress policy is not of assisting or cooperating with any function or activity, calculated to enhance the power or prestige of British imperialism in India. Ceremonial, official or social functions of this kind must therefore be avoided and no Congress member should take part in them.

5. No Congress member of the legislatures may accept a title given by the British government.

6. The Congress Party in each provincial assembly must act as a disciplined body. Individual members shall have no official contacts with government other than those resulting from their duties as members, and such as may be expressly authorized by the party.

7. Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the election manifesto and the Congress agrarian resolution. In particular, they should work for:

- i. A substantial reduction in rent and revenue.
- ii. Assessment of income-tax, on a progressive scale, on agricultural incomes, subject to a prescribed minimum.
- iii. Fixity of tenure.

- iv. Relief from the burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue.
- v. Repeal of all repressive laws.
- vi. Release of political prisoners, internees and detenues.
- vii. Restoration of lands and property confiscated or sold by government during civil disobedience movements.
- viii. Eight hours day for industrial workers, without reduction of pay, living wage.
- ix. Prohibition of intoxicating liquor and drugs.
- x. Unemployment relief.
- xi. Reduction of high salaries, allowances, and cost of administration of government.

Congress members elected to the provincial legislature were also directed to give expression to certain important demands of all-India application, such as substantial reduction of the military expenditure as well as of the higher civil services, complete national control over trade and tariffs and currency, repeal of all repressive legislations, freedom of speech, press and association and opposition to war preparations, credit and loans.<sup>12</sup>

Doubts arose regarding the propriety of taking the Oath of Allegiance to the British rulers by members elected to the legislatures before assuming office. It was feared that taking such an oath would go counter to the objective of Purna Swaraj. The Working Committee declared that "the taking of that oath, in order to enable participation in the work of the legislatures, in no way lessens or varies the demands for independence". However, it was also decided that before taking the oath, members elected should take a pledge declaring allegiance to the Indian people. The all-India convention held on 19th and 20th March 1937 was utilized to take the pledge stated as follows:

I, a member of this All-India Convention convened by the Indian National Congress, pledge myself to the service of India and to work in the legislatures and outside for the Independence of India and the ending of the exploitation and poverty of our

12. Zaidi and Zaidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-268

people. I pledge myself to work under the discipline of the Congress for the furtherance of Congress ideals and objectives to the end that India may be free and independent and her millions freed from the heavy burdens they suffer from.<sup>13</sup>

## **V. Conditional Acceptance of Ministries**

The Congress Working Committee which met on 17th, 18th March 1937, immediately before the Convention referred to above, finally took a decision on the controversial question of office acceptance.

The Working Committee decided not to reject office as demanded by the left-wing. The Committee was also against acceptance of office just because of the Congress commanded a majority in a number of provinces, as argued by the right-wing leaders. It wanted to be satisfied that the Governor would not use his "special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities". In the absence of such an assurance from the rulers, the Congress would not accept office and if it obtained the assurance it would accept office. The justification for this policy in the words of the official historian of the Congress, is as follows:

In six out of eleven provinces the party that came in a majority would not touch office with a pair of tongs nor would it keep its hands wholly off the business. If the Congress annihilated itself as a parliamentary limb of the nation, the Government knew what to do. If the Congress on the contrary assumed office, the Government would soon adjust themselves to their new environment, for the bureaucracy is an expert in the art of adjusting itself to the changing conditions and bidding its time for an opportunity to overthrow them. The Congress would not let Government play their game according to their wonted lines.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier, we had dealt at length with the attitude of the Congress, the moderates and the caste-communal politicians towards the new constitution. The federal system with regard to the Central government was equally unacceptable to all of them. As with the

13. *Ibid.* p. 515.

14. Patabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

provincial administration, the constitutional provisions might be acceptable to them provided the special powers vested in the Governor were removed.

The Congress was now trying to get special powers vested in the Governor freezed at the provincial level, while rejecting the federal system at the Centre. Such a policy was well-suited to the needs of the bourgeois politicians even outside the Congress. However, the bourgeois parties were not prepared to organise struggles against the Federation at the Centre and to refuse to form ministries even temporarily in the provinces in order to get the special powers of the Governor freezed. The Congress was ready to rally the people against the Federation and to keep away from forming ministries at the provincial level until a clear assurance was obtained from the British with regard to the special powers vested in the Governor. The Congress, in fact, maintained that position for three months even in the provinces in which it commanded a majority in the legislature. Such a situation never existed before or after it in Indian politics.

It was relatively easy to take this decision rather than implementing it. None of the Governors, nor the Viceroy, nor the British Government was prepared to give such an assurance as demanded by the Congress. They maintained that giving an assurance against the exercise of powers vested in accordance with the provisions of the constitution was "unconstitutional". Not only the British authorities, but even the moderates like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru took this attitude. On the contrary, many Indians who were known to be constitutional experts maintained that the attitude of the congress was correct both politically and constitutionally. A.B. Kieths, the top constitutional expert in England, concurred with this view.

However, rather than remaining confined within the narrow circles of constitutional experts and politicians as a point for debate, it became a live political issue with the people. A country-wide *hartal* was observed on 1st April, the day on which the provisions with regard to provincial autonomy in the new constitution came

into force. On that day millions of people were rallied behind the proposal put forward by the Congress to reject the British-made constitution and to constitute a Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution of the Indian people. Not only the Congress committees and activists, but also trade unions and other mass organizations and the Communist and Socialist parties actively participated in the *hartal* and demonstrations. These demonstrations naturally provided support to the Congress stipulation for forming ministries.

But both the British authorities and the right-wing Congress leadership equally dreaded the continuance of this struggle with the direct participation of the people. Although 'interim' minority governments were formed by other parties where the Congress had kept itself away, the British rulers knew that these governments had no popular backing. Those who joined these 'governments' were known imperialist agents and were hated by a vast majority of the people. From the past experience the authorities had learnt that if such a situation was allowed to continue, people would resort to fierce struggles which they would not be able to put down even by repressive measures.

The right-wing Congress leaders, on the other hand, could not even think of overthrowing the British rule through a mass revolution and establishing a state of the Indian people. Whenever mass struggles broke out, they stood in the forefront claiming themselves to be the leaders of these struggles and utilizing that position to bargain with the rulers. This had been their tactics. Precisely for the same reason, they could accept neither the anti-struggle approach of the moderates nor the leftist approach of leading militant mass struggles along revolutionary paths. They wanted to strive for a compromise with the rulers by standing in the forefront of the struggles. This was what had happened, in fact, in 1920-21 and 1930-31 and the same was being repeated in 1937. Unlike the moderates and the caste-communal politicians, the right-wing Congress leaders were not ready to form ministries "strictly in accordance with the constitution" as soon as they obtained a majority in the legislatures. At the same time, they were frightened by the waves of people's struggles that might

naturally arise out of the political uncertainty following the refusal to form the ministries. They indisputably wanted to avoid such a situation.

It was in this circumstance that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders together with the legal experts supporting their views entered into a controversy with the British authorities and their legal experts on the "legal validity of demanding assurance" with regard to the exercise of special powers vested in the Governor. Although in form the controversy was legal as it related to the interpretation of the constitution, in content it was political. The crux of the issue was whether the people's representatives (the bourgeoisie and its champions) should be able to run the administration, though within the framework of limited provincial autonomy, without interference from the Governor. Although both sides displayed extreme rigidity in presenting their arguments, they had a desire to reach a settlement. Both adopted a tone, language and arguments helpful to avoid a clash and to facilitate a settlement.

Since neither side was in a position to backslide, the resulting deadlock continued for three months. During this period "interim" governments were in power in the Congress majority provinces. The popular feelings rose high against them and their British supporters, and the Communists, Socialists and other leftists tried to give these feelings an organized form of anti-imperialist struggle. In the 'war of statements' between the British and the Congress in this period, each stage turned out to be a step towards a compromise. Finally, on 21st June the Viceroy made a statement which helped to end the deadlock.

The Viceroy's statement may be summarized as follows. There need be no fear that the Governors would take steps over the heads of the popular ministers, whatever be the wording in the constitution. The experience of the non-Congress ministries, majority as well as minority, bears witness to this. Even assuming that doubts and distrust expressed by the Congress are honest, it can feel assured that the Governors will not unnecessarily interfere in the day-to-day functioning of the ministers and that there will be no hindrance to their carrying on the rule in accordance with their policies.

Did this constitute the assurance the Congress had sought? The right-wing leadership (Working Committee) said it did. Because, the Viceroy, while admitting the probability of the Governor dismissing the ministry in extraordinary circumstances or the ministry resigning, had clarified that the Governor would not interfere in the day-to-day functioning of the ministry. Once this approach was adopted, its practice depended mainly on the personal relation between the Governor and the ministers. The moment this relation was vitiated, the ministry could resign. If there was a difference of opinion between the Governor and the ministry which might not be too crucial to warrant its resignation, the ministers had the right to place it before the people. Therefore, the Working Committee which met in the first week of July 1937 resolved that "Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto. But it desires to make it clear that office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further in every possible way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programmes on the other."

The Working Committee was of the view that though the assurance demanded by the AICC in March was not there in the literal sense, its essence was contained in the official statement. So, the Committee took the decision without calling another meeting of the AICC to ratify it, since it considered that any further delay in taking a decision would be detrimental to the interests of the nation.

It may be recalled that Nehru who was the president of the Congress when the Working Committee took this decision had been opposed to the approach contained in the resolution of the Committee. Besides him, there were many others among the leaders and ordinary Congressmen who were similarly opposed to office acceptance. Yet they were prepared to implement the decision, since the minority had to abide by the majority decision. Accordingly, Congress ministries were formed not only in five provinces where it had commanded a majority but also in Bombay



and the NWF Province with the help of certain others. After a few months Congress ministries were formed in Sind and Assam also with the help of certain other groups. Thus, the Congress transformed itself into a ruling party at the provincial level.

# **Appendix (i)**

## **The Communist Party and Parliamentarism**

### **I**

#### **The New Epoch and The New Parliament**

The attitude of Socialist Parties towards parliamentarism was originally, at the time of the first International one of utilising the bourgeois parliament for purposes of agitation. Participation in parliamentary activity was looked upon from the point of view of developing class-consciousness i.e. of awakening in the proletariat class hostility towards the ruling class. Changes in this attitude were brought about not through change of doctrine but under the influence of political development. Owing to the uninterrupted advance of the forces of production and the widening sphere of capitalist exploitation, capitalism and together with it the parliamentary state acquired a lasting stability.

This gave rise to the adaptability of the parliamentary tactics of the Socialist Parties to “organise” legislative activity in the bourgeois parliament, and the ever-growing significance of the struggle for reforms within the capitalist system, as well as the predominating influence of the so-called ‘immediate demand,’ and the conversion of the maximum programme into a figure of speech as an altogether remote “final goal”. This served as a basis for the development of parliamentary careerism, corruption, and open or hidden betrayal of the fundamental interests of the working class.

The attitude of the Third International towards parliamentarism is determined, not by a new doctrine but by the changed goal of

This thesis adopted by the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, 17th July to 17th August, 1920. Reproduced in India in “The Communist” of July 1936

parliamentarism itself. During the previous epoch the parliament has performed a certain progressive function as the weapon of developing capitalism, but under the present conditions of unbridled Imperialism, the parliament has become a tool of falsehood, deceit, violence and enervating gossip. In face of Imperialistic devastation, violation, plunder, robbery and ruination, parliamentary reforms, devoid of system, of constancy and of definite plan, have lost every practical significance for the working masses.

Parliament has lost its stability like the whole of bourgeois society. The sudden transition from the organic to the critical epoch has created the foundation for new proletarian tactics in the field of parliamentarism. The Russian Workers' Party (Bolsheviks) has worked out the essence of revolutionary parliamentarism already in the preceding period, owing to the fact that Russia since 1905 has lost its political and social equilibrium and entered upon the period of storm and stress.

To the extent that some Socialists with an inclination for communism point out the moment of revolution in their respective countries has not yet arrived, and so decline to break away from the parliamentary opportunists, they reason in fact consciously or unconsciously from the consideration that the present epoch is one of relative stability of imperialist society, and they assume therefore that practical results may be achieved in the struggle for reform by a coalition with such man as Turatti and Longuet. As soon as Communism comes to light it must start out by elucidating the character of the present epoch (culminations of capitalism, imperialistic self-negation and self-destruction, uninterrupted growth of civil war etc.). Political relationships and political groupings may be different in different countries, but the essence of the matter is everywhere the same; we must start with the direct preparation of a proletarian uprising, politically and technically, for the destruction of the bourgeoisie and for the creation of the new proletarian state.

The parliament at present can no way serve as the arena of a struggle for reform, for improving the lot of the working people as it was at certain periods of the preceding epoch. The centre of gravity of political life at present has been completely and finally

transferred beyond the limits of the parliament. On the other hand, owing not only to its relationship to the working masses, but also to the complicated mutual relations within the various groups of the bourgeoisie itself, the bourgeoisie is forced to have some of its policies in one way or another passed through the parliament, where the various cliques haggle for power, exhibit their strong sides and betray their weak ones, get themselves unmasked etc. Therefore it is the immediate historic task of the working-class to tear this apparatus out of the hands of the ruling classes, to break and destroy it, and to create in its place a new proletarian apparatus. At the same time, however, the revolutionary general staff of the working-class vitally concerned in having its scouting parties in the parliamentary institutions of the bourgeoisie in order to facilitate this task of destruction.

Thus the fundamental difference between the tactics of Communists entering parliament with revolutionary aims in view, and the tactics of the Socialist parliamentarians, become perfectly clear. The latter act on the assumption of the relative stability and the indefinite durability of the existing order, they consider it their task to achieve reforms by all means and are concerned to make the masses appreciate every accomplishment as the merit of Social Democratic parliamentarism (Turatti, Longuet and Co.)

Instead of the old compromising parliamentarism a new parliamentarism has come to life, as a weapon for destruction of parliamentarism as a whole. But the aversion towards the traditional practices of the old parliamentarism drives some revolutionary elements into the camp of the opponents of parliamentarism on principle (L.W.W. the revolutionary Syndicalists, German Communist Labour Party)

Taking all this into consideration the Second Congress adopts the following theses:—

## II

### **Communism, the Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and the Utilisation of the Bourgeois Parliament**

1. Parliamentarism at a state system, has become a "democratic" form of the role of the bourgeoisie, which at a certain stage of its development needs the function of national

representation that outwardly would be an organisation of a "national will" standing outside of classes, but in reality is an instrument of oppression and suppression in the hands of the ruling capitalists.

2. Parliamentarism is definite form of State order. Therefore it can in no way be a form of Communist Society, which recognises neither classes, nor class-struggle, nor any form of State authority.

3. Parliamentarism cannot be a form of proletarian government during the transition period between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and that of the proletariat. At the moment when the accentuated class-struggle turns into civil war the proletariat must inevitably form its State organisation as a fighting organisation, which cannot contain any of the representatives of the former ruling class; all fictions of a "national will" are harmful to the proletariat at that time and a parliamentary division of authority is needless and injurious to it; the only form of proletarian dictatorship is a Republic of Soviets.

4. The bourgeois parliaments, which constitute one of the most important apparatus of the State machinery of the bourgeoisie, cannot be won over by the proletariat any more than can the bourgeois order in general. The task of the proletariat consists in blowing up the whole machinery of the bourgeoisie, in destroying it, and all the parliamentary institutions with it, whether they be republican or constitutional monarchical.

5. The same relates to the local government institutions of the bourgeoisie, which theoretically is not correct to differentiate from the State organisations. In reality they are part of the same apparatus of the State machinery of the bourgeoisie which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

6. Consequently, Communism repudiates parliamentarism as the form of the future; it renounces the same as a form of class dictatorship of the proletariat; it repudiates the possibility of winning over the parliaments; its aim is to destroy parliamentarism. Therefore it is only possible to speak of utilising the bourgeois state organisations with the object of destroying them. The question can only exclusively be discussed on such a plane.

7. All class-struggle is a political struggle, because it is finally a struggle for power. Any strike, when it spreads through the whole country, is a menace to the bourgeois State, and thus acquires a political character. To strive to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to destroy its state, means to carry on political warfare. To create one's own class apparatus—whatever such an apparatus may be—means to gain political power.

8. Consequently the question of a political struggle does not end in the question of one's attitude towards the parliamentary system. It is a general condition of the class-struggle of the proletariat in so far as the struggle grows from a small and personal one to a general struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order as a whole.

9. The elementary means of the struggle of the proletariat against the rule of the bourgeoisie is first of all, the method of the mass demonstrations. Such mass demonstrations are prepared and carried out by the organised masses of the proletariat, under the direction of a united, disciplined, centralised Communist Party. Civil war is war. In this war the proletariat must have its efficient political officers, its good political general staff, to conduct operations during all the stages of that fight.

10. The mass struggle means a whole system of developing demonstrations growing ever more acute in form and logically leading to an uprising against the capitalist order of Government. In this warfare of the masses developing into a civil war, the guiding party of the proletariat must, as a general rule, secure every and all lawful positions making them its auxiliaries in the revolutionary work, and subordinating such positions to the plans of the general campaign, that of the mass struggle.

11. One of such auxiliary supports is the rostrum of the bourgeois parliament. Against participation is a political campaign one should not use the argument that parliament is a bourgeois Government institution. The Communist Party enters such institutions not for the purpose of organisation work, but in order to blow up the whole bourgeois machinery and the parliament itself from within (for instance the work of Liebknecht in Germany, of the Bolsheviks in the 'Imperialist Duma', in the 'Democratic Conference', in the

‘Pre-Parliament of Kerensky’, and lastly, in the ‘Constituent Assembly’, and also in Municipal Dumas, and the activities of the Bulgarian Communists).

12. This work within the parliaments, which consists chiefly in making revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary platform the denouncing of enemies, the ideological unification of the masses who are still looking up to the parliamentary platform, captivated by democratic illusions, especially in backward territories, etc. must be fully subordinated to the objects and tasks of mass struggle outside the parliament.

The participation in the election campaign and the revolutionary propaganda from the parliamentary tribune has a special importance for the winning over of those elements of the workers, who as perhaps the agrarian working masses—have stood far away from the revolutionary movement and the political life.

13. If the Communists have the majority in the local Government institutions, they must (a) carry on a revolutionary opposition against the bourgeois central authority; (b) do all for the aid of the poor population (economical measures, establishment or attempt to establish an armed worker’s militia); (c) point out on every occasion the barriers which the bourgeois State power puts against really great changes; (d) develop on this basis the sharpest revolutionary propaganda without fearing a conflict with the State authorities; (e) under certain conditions substitute local Workers’ Councils for the Municipal administration. The whole activity of the Communists in the communal administration therefore must be a part of the general work of destruction of the capitalist system.

14. The election campaign must be carried on not in the sense of obtaining a maximum of votes, but in that of a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses around the mottoes of the Proletarian Revolution. The election campaign must be conducted by the entire mass of party members, not by the leaders alone; it is necessary to make use of and be in complete touch with all the manifestation of the masses within (strikes, demonstrations, movements among soldiers and sailors etc.) going on at the moment; it is necessary to summon all the masses of the proletarian organisations to active work.

15. In complying with all these conditions as well as with those indicated in a special instruction, the parliamentary work must present a direct contrast to the dirty "politics", which has been practised by the Social Democratic-Parties of all countries, enter parliament with the object of supporting that "democratic" institution or at least to "win it over". The Communist Party can only recommend a revolutionary use of the parliament as exemplified by Karl Liebknecht, Heglund and the Bolsheviks.

### III

16. "Anti-Parliamentarism", in principle, in the sense of an absolute and categorical, repudiations in the election and the parliamentary revolutionary work, cannot, therefore, bear criticism and is a naive childish doctrine, which is founded some times on the healthy disgust of politicians, but which does not understand the possibilities of revolutionary parliamentarism. Besides, very often this doctrine is connected with a quite erroneous representation of the role of the Party, which in this case is considered not a fighting centralised advanced guard of the workers, but as a de-centralised system of badly joined revolutionary nuclei.

17. On the other hands an acknowledgment of the value of parliamentary work in no way leads to an absolute in-all- any-case acknowledgments of the necessity of concrete elections and concrete participation in parliamentary sessions. The matter depends upon a series of specific conditions. Under certain circumstances it may become necessary to leave the Parliament. The Bolshevik did so when they left the Pre-Parliament in order to break it up to weaken it, and to set up against it the Petrograd Soviet which was then prepared to lead the uprising ; they acted in the same way in the Constituent Assembly on the day of its dissolution, converting the Third Congress of the Soviets into the centre of political events. In other circumstances boycotting of the elections may be necessary, and a direct violent storming of both the great bourgeois state apparatus and the parliamentary bourgeois clique, or a participation in the elections with a boycott of the parliament itself, etc.



18. In this way, while recognising as a general rule the necessity of participating in the elections to the Central Parliament, and the institutions of local self government, as well as in the work in such institutions, the Communist Party must decide the question concretely, according to the specific conditions of the given moment. Boycotting the election or the parliament, or leaving the parliament is permissible, chiefly when there is a possibility for an immediate transition to an armed fight for power.

19. At the same time one must constantly bear in mind the relative unimportance of this question. If the centre of gravity lies in a struggle for the power outside the parliament, then naturally the question of a proletarian dictatorship and a mass fight, for it, is immeasurably greater than the secondary one of using the parliament.

20. Therefore the Communist International insists categorically that it considers any division or attempt at a division within the Communist Parties united on this aim as a crime against the Labour movement. The Congress calls upon all the elements which are in favour of the mass-struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, under the direction of centralised Party of the revolutionary proletariat gaining influence over all the mass organisations of the working-class to strive for a complete unity between the Communist elements, notwithstanding any possible disagreement on the question of utilising the bourgeois parliaments.

#### IV

#### **Revolutionary Parliamentarism**

For securing the real execution of revolutionary parliamentary tactics it is necessary that :—

1. The Communist Party in general and its Central Committee should during the preparatory stage, before the parliamentary elections inspect very carefully the quality of the personnel of the parliamentary fractions. The Central Committee should be responsible for the parliamentary Communist fraction. The Central Committee shall have the undeniable right to reject any candidate of any organisation, if it is not perfectly convinced that such a

candidate will carry on a real Communist policy while in parliament.

The Communist Parties must desist from the old Social-Democratic habit of electing as delegates only the so called "experienced" parliamentarians, chiefly lawyers and so on, as a rule workmen should be put forward as candidates, without troubling about the fact that these may be sometimes simple rank-and-file workmen without much parliamentary experience. The Communist Party must break with merciless contempt all elements who try to make a career by joining the party just before elections in order to get into parliament. The central Communist Parties must sanction the candidature of only such men who by long years of work have proved their unwavering loyalty to the working-class.

2. When the elections are over, the organisation of the parliamentary fractions must be wholly in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Party—whether the Party in general is a lawful or illegal one at the given moment. The chairman of the bureau of the parliamentary fraction of the Communists must be confirmed in their functions by the Central Committee of the Party. The Central Committee of the Party must have its permanent representative in the parliamentary fraction with the right of veto. On all important political question shall get preliminary instructions from the Central Committee of the Party.

At each forthcoming important debate of the Communists in the parliament, the Central Committee be entitled and bound to appoint or reject the orator of the fraction, to demand that he submit previously the theses of his speech, or the text for confirmation by the Central Committee, etc. Each candidate entered in the list of the Communists must sign a paper to the effect that at the first request of the Central Committee of the Party shall be bound to give up his mandate, in order that in a given situation the act of leaving parliament may be executed in unison.

3. In countries where reformist, semi-reformist or simply career seeking elements have managed to penetrate into the parliamentary fraction of the Communists (as has already happened in several places) the Central Committee of the Communist Parties are bound radically to weed out the personnel of the fractions, on the principle

that it is better for the cause of the working-class to have a small but truly Communist fraction, than a large one without a regular Communist line of conduct.

4. A Communist delegate, by decision of the Central Committee is bound to combine lawful work with illegal work. In countries where the Communist delegates enjoy a certain inviolability this must be utilised by way of rendering assistance to the illegal organisation and for the propaganda of the Party.

5. The Communist members shall make all their parliamentary work dependent on the work of the Party outside the parliament. The regular proposing of the demonstrative measures, not for the purpose of having them passed by the bourgeois majority, but for purposes of propaganda, agitation and organisation, must be carried on under the direction of the Party and its Central Committee.

6. In the event of Labour demonstrations in the streets or other revolutionary movements the Communist members must occupy the most conspicuous place—at the head of proletarian masses.

7. The Communist deputies must try to get in touch (under the control of the Party) with the revolutionary working men, peasants and other workers either by correspondence or otherwise. They must in no way act like the Social-Democratic deputies who carry on mere business relations with their constituents. They must always be at the disposal of the Communist organisations for propaganda work in the country.

8. Each Communist member must remember that he is not a 'legislator', who is bound to seek agreements with the other legislators, but an agitator of the Party, detailed into the enemy's camp in order to carry out the orders of the Party there. The Communist member is answerable not to the wide mass of his constituents, but to his own Communist Party—whether lawful or illegal.

9. The Communist member must speak in parliament in such a way as to be understood by every workman, peasant, washer-woman, shepherd, so that the Party may publish his speeches and spread them to the most remote villages of the country.

10. The rank and file Communist worker must not shrink from speaking in the bourgeois parliaments, and not give way to the so-

called experienced parliamentarians, even if such workmen are novices in parliamentary methods. In case of need the workmen members may read their speeches from notes, in order that the speech might be printed afterwards in the papers or in leaflet form.

11. The Communist member must make use of the parliamentary tribune to denounce not only the bourgeoisie and the hangers-on, but also for the denunciation of the Social-patriots, Reformists, the half-politicians of the centre and other opponents of Communism, and for the wide propaganda of the ideas of the Third International.

12. The Communist members, even though there should be only one or two of them in the parliament, should by their whole conduct challenge capitalism, and never forget that only those worthy of the name of Communist—who not in words only but in deeds are the mortal enemy of the bourgeois order and its Social-patriotic flunkeys.

## **Appendix(ii)**

### **Combating Communist Expansion Legally**

#### **Conspiracy**

It now remains to examine the weapons with which the authorities in India have been equipped to enable them to combat this dangerously insidious movement. For several years the weapon most commonly used was section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code which provides for the infliction of a maximum sentence of transportation for life on two or more persons who conspire to deprive the King-Emperor of the sovereignty of British India. It soon became apparent, however, that the value of this section, at first a useful means of bringing offenders to speedy justice, had been seriously impaired when the seeds sown at Cawnpore and fostered by Bhagat Singh at Lahore bore fruit at Meerut in 1930 and 1931. Mention has been made in an earlier chapter of M.N.Roy's criticism of the failure of the accused at Cawnpore to extract even a modicum of advertisement from their trial. Bhagat Singh made no such mistake. The prisoners' dock became a political forum and the countryside rang with his heroics. His photograph was on sale in every city and township and for a time rivalled in popularity even that of Mr. Gandhi himself. His antics and those of his confederates eventually succeeded in bringing the

Excerpts from : "INDIA AND COMMUNISM", Confidential Report Compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933. Revised up to 1st January 1935, Pages 286-309. In this Confidential Report this Chapter is entitled: "INDIA'S LEGAL ARMOURY AGAINST COMMUNISM".

ordinary law to a standstill and in reducing the courts to a state of impotence, and it became necessary in 1930 for the governor-general to promulgate a special Ordinance, without which their trial might never have been brought to a conclusion. As has already been shown Bhagat Singh's discovery was not without its effect on the other large conspiracy case which was proceeding at Meerut at that time, and, although this latter case never attracted such attention in India as did its contemporary at Lahore, the Communists concerned in it did their utmost, nevertheless, to exploit its propaganda value.

### **Cumbrous Procedure**

Much of the trouble was undoubtedly caused by a series of amendments to the code of Criminal Procedure, each of which played its part in undermining the authority of the courts. One such amendment, which compelled the presiding magistrate or judge to adjourn the proceedings at the dictates of one or other of the counsel, did particular harm in this way. Of this section a Justice of the Calcutta High Court wrote in a judgement in 1931 that, while it remained on the statute book, there was no reason why any defendant need ever be convicted and, conversely no reason why any complainant should ever allow him to be acquitted. The section in question [526(8)] has recently been amended, and, the Allahabad High Court reversed some earlier rulings which made for delay and, to that extent, the position has improved, but four costly years of the Meerut conspiracy case and the subsequent withdrawal of another such case in Delhi made it clear that more effective means must be found of grappling with Communism than the invocation of the cumbrous legal processes which surround a charge of large-scale conspiracy.

### **Seditious Speeches and Writings**

Profiting by the experience of the 'past', each Indian province has tackled the problem in its own particular way. In Bombay, where the position has probably been the most acute resort, was first had to various sections of the permanent law, but when that proved ineffectual, it was found necessary to bring the temporary

emergency legislation into play. The public advocacy of Communist doctrines was countered by judicious prosecutions under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, which provides for a maximum sentence of transportation for life\* for those who bring or attempt to bring into hatred or contempt, or excite or attempt to excite disaffection towards, His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India. It is a pleasing testimony to the success of these and other similar efforts on the part of the authorities that in all the maelstrom of fiery words written and spoken by Communists in Bombay in the days that immediately followed the pronouncement of judgement at Meerut, there was hardly an instance of an attack on British imperialism as such; all references were to imperialism generally. But while it is gratifying to see persistent efforts rewarded, almost as much harm can be done by general as by specific incitement, and there are obvious disadvantages in a law which permits male-factors to evade it by so simple a ruse as that which became apparent in Bombay.

### **Promotion of Class-Warfare**

At the same time attempts were made to include the speeches of Communist leaders in Bombay in the category of "promotion of feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects" *in pari materia* (namely, the workers and peasants on the one hand and the capitalists and landlords on the other) which is an offence punishable under section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code with two years' rigorous imprisonment. A number of such cases which were instituted as a result of speeches made on "May Day" 1932 were at first successful, and those who made them were convicted by the Chief Presidency Magistrate and sentenced each to a year's imprisonment.

When an appeal from one such case was lodged in the High Court, however, the Bench which heard it agreed with the Chief

\* The maximum penalty is very seldom inflicted.

Presidency Magistrate that it was not possible to limit the application of the section in question merely to classes of the community divided either by race or religion, but at the same time found considerable difficulty in discovering a satisfactory definition of the word 'capitalist' which it described as "altogether too vague a phrase to denote a definite and ascertainable class within the meaning of section 153-A". After discussing the literal sense of the word which, he said, meant "any-one who possesses any accumulated wealth," the Chief Justice went on to say: "On that definition practically everybody will be within the capitalist class. No doubt in the region of economic discussion capitalists are referred to in some limited sense. In reference to divisions between capital and labour the capitalist generally means a person with a considerable amount of property invested in industry. But if you take any definition of that sort, it is impossible to say what amount of capital would bring a man within the class. He might be within the class one day and without it the next. He may be a capitalist in one country and not in another." The accused person was, therefore, acquitted on this charge, though a concurrent conviction under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code was upheld.

### **Conflicting Opinions**

This decision was naturally followed by other appeals, most of which were similarly rewarded, though it is worthy of record that a dissenting judgement in one such case (where the appellant's attack had been on British capitalists and landlords) found that the speaker could "only have meant the British investors in Indian securities and traders in India, a class or sub-class to which his audience did not belong". In this judge's opinion, too, the division between landlords and tenants was "sufficiently clear-cut to justify their being termed separate and distinct classes". As, however, a concurrent sentence had been passed under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, the judge in question did not press his objection and the appeal was allowed in so far as it related to section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code.



### **A Sufficiently Clear Case**

Yet another case came up on appeal at the end of 1932 and was heard by a Bench over which the Chief Justice again presided. The Bench found that the speech complained of in this instance constituted "a virulent attack against the propertied classes in India" and that the man who made it had "shown from the context that he used the expression 'capitalist' in a narrow and restricted sense". The actual words used are of some importance and may profitably be quoted: "In India your Rajahs and Maharajahs and *Zamindars* and Capitalists also make friends with big bankers and loot both peasants and labourers." Of this passage the Chief Justice wrote: "It is clear, I think; from that passage that he is using the word 'capitalist' in the sense merely of financiers or bankers, and he makes that quite clear later on because he says that the labourers of the world number 15½ annas in the rupee and that the capitalists are quite a small class. Even if we hold that the word 'capitalist' as used in this speech is not a sufficiently well-defined class, it is quite clear that Rajahs, Maharajahs and *Zamindars* are a sufficiently definite class to come within section 153-A."

### **A Case in the United Provinces**

A man named Ram Saran Dass Johri had been responsible for distributing a pamphlet in connection with a peasants' conference which was held at Muttra under the auspices of the Labour Party, United Provinces, in November 1933. He had been convicted under section 18(1) of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act which provides for the punishment of those who publish or distribute unauthorised news-sheets. Section 4(1) (h) of the Press Act of 1932 refers to a pamphlet which tends to "promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects", and it is provided in sections 2(6) and 2(10) of the Act that such a pamphlet shall be an unauthorised news-sheet. Ram Saran Dass appealed against his conviction and, when the appeal came up, the Bench which heard it discussed the earliest of the

three Bombay judgements mentioned above and then went on to remark as follows: "The word 'capitalist' has not been used in the present pamphlet and, therefore, the particular difficulty which occurred in the Bombay ruling does not arise. The pamphlet, however, definitely refers, on the one side, to the *kisan* labourers in the Muttra district who labour in the fields and factories, and on the other hand, to the rich persons, the *zamindars*, the bankers, and the petty shop-keepers. I do not think that there is any difficulty in holding that the classes referred to in the pamphlet are sufficiently well defined for the purpose of the section in question." The appeal was, therefore, dismissed, and another blow was struck in vindication of the use of this particular section of the law against the preaching of Communism.

### **The Present Position**

The earlier rulings in Bombay, therefore (authoritative for the time being where the courts of that Presidency were concerned), raised doubts as to the real value of a prosecution, the success or failure of which hung upon the precise definition of a single word, or of a section of the law which gave to those whose activities the authorities sought to bring within it so wide a margin of safety. Those qualms still remain to some extent, though the High Court's more recent dicta have made it clear that there are circumstances in which the stock phrases which Communists are wont so glibly to use in their speeches and writings can be comprised within the *exhypothesi* indefinite and unascertainable classes to which, in fact, they undoubtedly refer. It remains to be seen how long it will take such speakers to adapt the precise form of their fulminations to the requirements of the law as now expounded. Meanwhile the value of the new weapon remains largely unimpaired so far as the rest of India is concerned, as can be demonstrated by the judgement delivered in March 1934 by the Allahabad High Court.

### **A Canadian Parallel**

It is of some interest to learn in this connection that the Supreme Court of Ontario had no doubts when faced with a question almost identical with that with which the Bombay High

Court had to deal. On the 13th November 1931, the Honourable Mr. Justice Wright passed sentence in Ontario on Timothy Buck and seven other members of the Communist Party of Canada. In the course of his charge to the jury he remarked that, "this Communist Party of Canada divides the people of Canada into two classes – the proletariat, which they say are all wage-earners, and the *bourgeoisie*, who are outside that classification and would include property owners, farmers, men who conduct their own business, and all the other classes. There is a third or middle class called the petty *bourgeoisie* which I think includes merchants and others; but for general purposes their classification is the proletariat on the one side and the *bourgeoisie* on the other. In a democratic country such as this, when a man may be a proletarian today, and to-morrow may be a *bourgeois*, and the reverse, is it a just, proper, lawful thing to set one of these classes against the other? Is it just and proper to stress and to advocate a struggle of one class to destroy the other?"

### **Communism, a Species of Treason**

There is another passage in the record of this interesting Canadian case which is worthy of attention. Immediately before pronouncing sentence upon them, the judge addressed the accused in the dock as follows: "You have not been criminals in the ordinary sense, but I do not regard you as political criminals. Your offence is of an entirely different nature from that of a political criminal; it strikes at the very foundation of our social and governmental fabric in this country. It is a species of treason, which is one of the most detestable offences of which any person can be found guilty." The cry was frequently heard both in and out of the court at Meerut that the accused in the recent conspiracy case were being prosecuted for their political opinions. Although this theory was exploded by the passage from the judgement of the Allahabad High Court which was quoted on page 139, it is interesting to know, nevertheless, that legal opinion in another part of the Empire coincides with that in India, however unconvincing such opinions may be to those who hold all imperialist courts in derision.

### **The Calcutta Carters' Strike**

A case of more than usual interest, no less from the legal point of view than because it signaled a new departure in Communist tactics, was that which followed a strike of carters in Calcutta in 1930. To facilitate a right appreciation of the points involved, I give a short synopsis of the events which led up to and followed the rioting which Sir Charles Tegart, the then Commissioner of Police, described as the fiercest which he had ever seen in Calcutta. On the 1st April, new rules came into force which imposed restricted loads on buffalo carts and prohibited the working of buffaloes between the hours of noon and 3 p.m. Two days earlier a crowded meeting of carters had been held in one of the public parks and had been addressed by the leaders of the newly-formed Carters' Union, three of them Communists and a fourth a well-known Labour agitator. It was there decided that the carters should refuse to unyoke their buffaloes when ordered to do so and should defy the rule to that effect and court arrest. The speakers also instigated the members of their audience to refuse to pay fines in court and, as it afterwards appeared, to congregate on the Howrah Bridge and to leave their carts in the roadway. The leaders in question later visited the *kathals* (bullock cart depots) and tendered much the same advice.

At noon on the 1st April, therefore, the large number of carters who were as usual plying their carts in the immediate surroundings of the Howrah Bridge unyoked their animals and removed the wheels from their carts, thus forming a regular series of barricades across the streets. Other streets over a wide area were simultaneously obstructed with Corporation dust-bins, road metal, bales of merchandise, corrugated iron sheets and iron rails, in a manner which places beyond all doubt the fact that some central organisation was responsible for the whole occurrence. The police who attempted to remove the obstruction were met with a fusillade of brick-bats, pieces of road metal and iron bars, not only from the carters who had entrenched themselves behind the barricades but also from the occupants of neighbouring houses and were only able to clear the area of rioters after repeated resort to rifle and revolver fire. Communist in origin, the fight was taken

up by the Congress as well a fact which is proved by a series of entirely unprovoked attacks by students which occurred later in the evening (some two hours after the main riot had been quelled) in the collegiate area remote from the seat of the earlier disturbances. A report written a fortnight later spoke of the police as having been "kept continuously on the run since the 1st" and stated that "the intention of our opponents is obviously to run the police to a standstill and to tamper with their loyalty". The events of the intervening period, though no less serious from the Government's point of view, are, however, less germane to my present restricted theme than is the original outbreak—for the carters had learned their lesson and from the 2nd April onwards, the Communist leaders had to rely to an increasing extent on the Congress rank and file for the furtherance of their aims—and I have referred to subsequent developments only because they point to one of the dangers of allowing Communism to succeed.

### **Incitement to Rioting**

Meanwhile, six Communist leaders had been arraigned before the Chief Presidency Magistrate on charges of conspiracy to commit, and abetment of unlawful assembly and rioting by more than ten persons (sections 120-B and 117, read with sections 143 and 147, of the Indian Penal Code). All six were in due course sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment (the maximum punishment provided by the Code being three years' rigorous imprisonment) and were ordered to furnish substantial security for their good behaviour for a period of three years after release. Three were subsequently acquitted by the High Court, but at a time when excitement had evaporated and when their power for evil had thus been considerably restricted. Inadequate though the sentences may seem to have been, when compared with the charges laid, they nevertheless had a salutary effect on the situation and proved the value of section 117 of the Indian Penal Code as a weapon for use against Communist agitators in times of stress.

### **Security for Maintenance of the Peace**

It was some days, however, before the six Communist accused referred to could be brought to book, and when they were at length arrested and brought before the court they were forthwith released on bail. They made full use of the period of grace thus allowed them in an endeavour to turn the agitation which they had stirred up into channels which would lead to a general industrial strike. In this they were ably assisted by two other Indian Communists who had hastened from Bombay to Calcutta at the first sign of trouble. Thus on the evening of the 2nd April, the Union leaders issued a revolutionary leaflet inciting the workers to organise a general strike under the leadership of the students in retaliation for the events of the previous day. At the same time Abdul Halim circulated another leaflet, printed in English and entitled "To Workers and Citizens of Calcutta", which also urged a sympathetic general strike. These leaflets and other of their kind were distributed at a well-attended public meeting where the speeches were punctuated with cries such as "Victory to the Red Army" and "Victory to Soviet Russia". On the following day another of the accused, freshly released on bail, addressed another meeting and advised the carters to continue to disobey the law, while a third addressed his public remarks to the Indian ranks of the police force, whom he advised to desert their posts.

Against activities of this nature by persons already within the clutches of the law an effective weapon was found in the shape of sections 107 and 117 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The former of these compels a person who is likely to disturb the public tranquillity to show cause why he should not execute a bond to keep the peace, and sub-section 3 of the latter section provides an immediate means of detaining such persons in custody (on their failing to execute a preliminary bond) while the more cumbrous processes involved in section 107 take their course. Faulty though such a course may be as a permanent remedy, it has its advantages as a measure of temporary relief in times of stress such as Calcutta was passing through in April 1930, and I venture the opinion that, had resort been had to it more frequently

in the past, the Meerut Conspiracy case would not have attained to the dimensions which it did.

### **Urgent Prevention of Apprehended Danger**

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal procedure also provides certain strictly limited powers which enable certain specified officers to direct those who show signs of endangering the public peace to "abstain from a certain act", and disobedience of lawful orders passed under that section is punishable under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code. So frequently has this section come before the courts on appeal, however, and so many are the legal rulings which limit and define its application and extent, that the part which it can now be made to play in the control of the activities of Communist leaders is meagre in the extreme. This was, perhaps, the draughtman's intention; for section 144 is primarily intended to cope with an immediate and unforeseen danger rather than with preparatory stages which lead up to it. It is, however, in the early stages of Communist preparation that action is most needed; for, when the time of immediate danger comes, the masses have generally been aroused and the milder forms of preventive action which the permanent law permits are then of no avail.

### **Propaganda Material**

It has been said elsewhere that the bulk of the present expenditure of the Eastern Secretariat of the Communist International on India is now devoted to propaganda, a steady and expensive stream of which has increasingly flowed into India since Communism first took root there. In order to give some idea of the extent of that stream, I may say that during 1934 the total number of Communist newspapers and periodicals held up in the mails was in the neighbourhood of 15,000 copies; this comprised some fifty different papers from no less than ten different countries in Europe, Asia, and America; and it is obvious from the results of the searches which preceded the Meerut conspiracy case and from numerous other finds of such literature that it is by no means all that was sent. Indeed, the subterfuges to which those

who send it resort in order to defeat the censorship and the shortness of the time available for examination preclude the possibility of obtaining cent percent results in this particular branch of work, for which the police owe so much to the postal department. Communist dailies are frequently wrapped in one or two pages of the *London Times* or the *New York Herald Tribune* or other papers of similar standing; books are wrapped in the dust covers of popular novels or religious works; the addresses of firms or shops are used as a cover to which such literature may be sent; and instructions such as those which an Indian distributor of a Communist weekly recently gave to the publishers are all too frequently carried out— "Please send these twelve copies in three packets of four copies each in plain wrappers as usual so as not to attract attention". To stem this persistent stream there are several methods. That most commonly employed is section 19 of the Sea Customs Act which provides that the Governor-General in Council may prohibit the bringing into India of any particular class of goods. In exercise of these powers a comprehensive notification was framed in 1927, prohibiting the import into India of any publication issued by or emanating from the Communist International or any organisation affiliated to or controlled by or connected with the Communist International. It was not long, however, before it became apparent that even this notification left certain loopholes through which such literature could legitimately find its way in to the country. In 1932, therefore, a fresh notification was issued which empowered Customs officials to seize an even greater variety of such matter. A copy of this new notification is printed as an appendix\*. Should any literature escape the Customs net and be found within India, it may be seized by certain postal officials under section 25 of the Post Office Act if it is in the course of transmission by post, or under section 178 of the Sea Customs Act by the local representative of the Customs Department if it is discovered elsewhere.

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\* Appendix-VII



## **Internal Propaganda**

A large amount of Communist propaganda is published in India itself, however, some of it being original writings, but the bulk of it reprints or vernacular translations of matter published abroad. For this there is a permanent remedy commonly in use, the practical value of which is strictly limited. Section 99-A of the Criminal Procedure Code provides for the proscription and forfeiture by a local Government of documents which infringe section 124-A or 153-A of the Indian Penal Code, both of which have been previously discussed. There are, however, numerous legal rulings on record to the effect that a local Government cannot pass such orders unless it has the matter complained of before it. Against a daily or even a weekly newspaper, published, possibly, in a town remote from the provincial headquarters by several days, such a provision is useless; for the particular issue complained of will have been read and re-read many times before the local Government whose concern it is can even have heard of its existence. In such a case the only effective method is to obtain and keep a substantial hold on both the printer and publisher, and this can only be done under the temporary provision of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act which will be discussed a little later.

## **An Effective Order in Bengal**

It frequently happens, however, that the authors, printers and publishers of inflammatory literature such as Indian Communists are wont to produce for mass consumption, conceal their identity, and the provisions of section 99-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure being largely ineffective, other measures are required to prevent the circulation of this type of literature. As a means of overcoming these difficulties, the Bengal Government issued, on the 23rd April 1928, an order under section 26(1) of the Post Offices Act which empowered two senior police officers in Bengal, who were named in the order, to impound "any inland or foreign postal article which may be discovered in the course of transmission by post, to contain literature directed to encourage international revolution". This order proved an effective weapon

against this class of literature, and the fact that it is still in force in its original form to-day is sufficient testimony to the successful manner in which it has been worked.

### **Emissaries from Britain**

Of the British Communists who have visited India from time to time Spratt, Bradley and Hutchinson have, of course, been prosecuted at Meerut while Clark and Bennett, the two Canadians mentioned in Chapter 17, decided to leave India of their own free will. The only other Communist of British extraction who has been dealt with under the Indian law is George Allison who, as Donald Campbell, arrived in Bombay in April 1926 and was deported therefrom some two years later after serving a term of imprisonment. His case raised some points of legal interest which it will, perhaps, be profitable to discuss. The charges in the lower court were framed under sections 466, 471 and 474 of the Indian Penal Code (the forgery of public documents, using forged documents as genuine and knowingly possessing forged documents, respectively), section 6, read with section 3, of the Indian Passport Act and the rules framed under it. It was with these charges before the jury that the whole of the prosecution evidence was heard and, not until the prosecution case had closed, did the judge himself question (on the strength of the definition of a "public servant") whether the case came under section 466 of the Indian Penal Code. Up to that time it had been assumed that a British passport was a document "made by a public servant"; but sections 21 and 14 of the Indian Penal Code, which define "public servant" and "servant of the Queen", make it clear that a document issued by an official in the United Kingdom does not come within the scope of section 466. This discovery had the effect of lowering the maximum punishment under section 471, I.P.C., from seven to two years' imprisonment. Shortly before the expiry of his sentence, Allison was placed on a vessel at sea and deported under section 5 of the Indian Passport Act, which authorizes the removal of any person who has entered British India in defiance of the Passport regulations and confers upon any officer of Government "all reasonable powers" for this purpose.

## **The Passport Act**

In this particular respect the Indian Passport Act is a satisfactory weapon in the hands of the authorities, but as a means of preventing the entry of Communist emissaries it has several shortcomings. Not least of these is the fact that the rules framed under section 3 of Act make no offence of entry into India by land without a passport except at three specified places. Rule 3 reads: "No person proceeding from any place outside India shall enter British India by sea or by air or by the Chaman, Khyber or Nushki land route unless he is in the possession of a passport." Although instances are rare of Moscow's emissaries having found their way to India otherwise than by usual sea-routes, yet cases are not lacking of unknown and unheralded aliens having been discovered in Burma, whence they can easily and lawfully make their way to Calcutta and so to India proper. Particularly was this the case when the French offensive began in Indo-China after the 1930 rebellion there. It is known, too, that many *Ghadr* emissaries have found their way to and from America by this route which is much favoured by Sikhs who have something to hide from the authorities. They travel from Calcutta to Burma or Singapore (where travellers from India stand in no lawful need of passports), onwards to Siam and thence through Yunnan to Shanghai, whereafter the party's smuggling rings on the Pacific coast ensure safe transit to California. Throughout the greater part of this 13,000 mile journey no questions are asked, passport control does not exist or can be overcome by the payment of a few small coins of the realm, and the stream of surreptitious travellers passes backwards and forwards unhampered. The absence of any control whatsoever on India's north-eastern frontier cannot but occasion considerable misgivings to those who are charged with the task of keeping track of Moscow's designs against India.

Similar, though possibly less aggravated, is the position in north-western India, as the continual flow of *Ghadr* emissaries from Russia through Afghanistan to India and back has shown. Fortunately, a friendly King in Afghanistan has stemmed the stream in recent years, but it seems a trifle improvident to rely

solely on the good offices of a none too stable foreign power for the protection of one's frontier from foreign penetration.

Another seeming flaw in the existing Passport Act is contained in the section which provides for the grant of visas of limited duration to those who profess a desire to pass through India *en route* for other countries, and yet fails to empower the Indian magistracy to inflict punishment on those who infringe the conditions on which such a visa was granted. Such cases are by no means rare and, although a charge of Communist activity has never yet been satisfactorily brought home to such a delinquent, several have fallen under strong suspicion and have been deported under the Foreigners Act, and in any case the dangers of the existence of such a loophole in the law are self-evident.

### **Foreign Agents**

The Foreigners Act mentioned above provides an effective means of ridding India of those emissaries of Moscow who cannot lay claim to British nationality. Section 3 empowers a local Government to order any foreigner to remove himself from British India, by a particular route if necessary, while the next succeeding section enables a District Magistrate to apprehend the person in question until such time as a decision shall have been reached. Failure to comply with the order renders the foreigner liable to imprisonment for an unspecified period. The existence of this section of the law has proved a valuable weapon against Communism. It will be recalled that a number of persons, including J. W. Johnstone, W. N. Kweit and H. G. Lynd, have been removed from India by virtue of it, and it is still Burma's most effective fieldpiece against the operations of Chinese Communists.

### **The Legal Position, Past, Present and Future**

When mention has been made of the fact that the Trades Disputes Act (which has recently been brought into operation in connection with the Bombay strike) has proved a broken reed and that legal opinion given in 1931 prevented the use of section 26

(1) of the Indian Post Office Act as a means of intercepting money orders\*, the complete tale has been told of India's scanty legal armoury against the spread of the gospel of an armed rebellion which has as its object the overthrow, not only of the King Emperor's authority but of the whole existing economic and social fabric. No one who has discerned the meaning of events described in previous chapters will deny that there are grave risks involved in a journey into the future for those who are equipped only with such rusty weapons as these. Nor are these risks only physical; it would be unwise to overlook the psychological dangers, which will be the greater by sudden contrast with the present position, sheltered as it is by temporary emergency legislation. There can be few who have forgotten how great a strain was put upon the morale of the subordinate ranks of the police in the early days of 1930 or who have lost sight of the moral advantage which subversive elements then gained from the apparent impotence of the authorities. It has already been shown that it was only the existence of the Bombay Special (Emergency Powers) Act which saved Bombay City, less than a year ago, from chaos, and her working class population from starvation and carnage. That Act is one of many whose validity will expire before the end of 1935, and if I give details of a few of the powers thus about to lapse, it is only because to do so will make clearer the distinction between the present state of comparative security and extreme difficulties which will have to be reckoned within 1936.

### **Provincial Acts**

Foremost amongst the additional powers thus temporarily bestowed are those which provide for the arrest and temporary detention of persons who have acted, are acting, or are about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or peace. Such powers exist in Bombay, Bengal, the Punjab and the North-West-Frontier Province and similar action could be taken against

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\* This decision did not affect existing arrangements for the interception of telegraphic money-orders, cheques, banker's drafts, etc.

Communists, in certain extreme cases, in Burma and Assam<sup>†</sup> also. More general is the power to prescribe the residence and movements of such persons, which has been given to every local Government except those in the Central Provinces and Madras\*; those who disobey such orders are liable to imprisonment. Other typical powers which these local Acts confer enable the authorities to secure reports of public meetings, to control on the operations of the posts and telegraphs (including the transmission of money order), to limit access to certain places, and to prohibit or regulate traffic, – none of which matters are adequately provided for elsewhere in the Indian Statute book. All are based on the old ordinances which were, in their turn, pieced together at the dictation of bitter experience of the country's legislative needs.

### **The Indian Press Act**

Complementary to these measures, there are two important temporary Acts of all-India application which are also due to lapse in December 1935—the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932. The first of these contained a useful provision which empowered a local Government to inflict a substantial fine on any printing press which was used for the purpose of printing or publishing subversive literature and also to confiscate the matter in question; and another section made illegal the sale, distribution or publication of literature of a similar nature. These provisions, at first included as sections 4 and 18 in the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931, were made more potent by the ordinances which the second civil disobedience movement brought forth. A special session of the Assembly at the end of 1932 passed a comprehensive Criminal Law Amendment Act and thereby upheld the greater virility of the Press Act and prolonged its operation for a further period of three years. The promulgation of the ordinances in January 1932 and their subsequent enactment had

<sup>†</sup>The Burma Criminal Amendment Act does not expire till the 31st July 1936. The equivalent Act in Assam is a permanent measure.

\* Burma and Assam must again be partially excepted.

an immediate and lasting effect on the tone of all classes of subversive writers except, perhaps, those who preferred to publish their work clandestinely, and even persons such as they found considerable difficulty in getting their handiwork printed and circulated.

### **A Specific Case**

As illustrating the uses to which the Press Act could be put, I may recall the case of Ram Saran Dass Johri which was discussed at an earlier stage in this chapter in connexion with section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code. Another case in point is the prosecution of Amir Haidar Khan, whose conviction in Madras in 1932 has already received brief mention in Chapter 17. The charges laid against him proceeded from the clandestine publication of a series of actionable leaflets. The drafting and publication of these leaflets were exclusively the work of Amir Haidar and one assistant who was also arrested. There was also evidence of their having been in possession of a number of these leaflets and of having distributed others. Amir Haidar was, therefore, charged under section 18 of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931 and, when further legal advice had been taken a supplementary charge of sedition (section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code) was added. Judgment was pronounced in both cases on the 14th November 1932 and Amir Haidar Khan was sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment for sedition and to six months' rigorous imprisonment on each of three counts under section 18 (two of these periods to run concurrently), the whole of the year's sentence in the latter case to take effect on expiry of the sentence under section 124-A, Indian Penal Code. Thus was a dangerous leader removed from the scene of his labours.

### **Unlawful Associations**

Another important direction in which the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1932 gave much needed assistance to the authorities was the provision of useful additions to the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, a measure of which little use had been made since 1922 when it became the butt of the

Indian Legislature and was reduced to a mere shadow of its former self. In the form in which it existed at the end of 1931, it merely enabled a local Government to notify as an unlawful association any organisation which had as its object interference with the administration or maintenance of law and order, or which constituted a danger to the public peace. Any person who could be proved to have assisted the operations of such an organisation was liable, on conviction, to a sentence not exceeding 6 months' rigorous imprisonment, while those who went one step further and assisted in the management or promotion of such an organisation ran the risk of imprisonment for two years. The ordinances promulgated at the beginning of 1932 made possible a close scrutiny of, and a rigid control over, the funds at the disposal of such unlawful associations, and the powers of local Governments were so extended as to include the ultimate confiscation of any funds which investigation proved, were intended for subversive purposes. These power were later included in the central legislation referred to and, although the occasions on which they have been exercised during the past two years are extremely few, they have nevertheless provided a useful reserve against any large influx of Communist money into India, particularly so since the Communist Party of India was declared unlawful. Another important provision in the Act so amended gave powers to local Governments to take possession of places used for the purposes of an unlawful association and of movable property found therein. In short, the legislature succeeded in making of this emasculated Act a real power in reserve against the operations of all subversive elements. Its independent value against individuals who overtly or secretly profess "applied Communism" (as M. N. Roy has called it), yet openly belong to no ascertainable Communist Party or association, is less apparent, however, and the fact that no prosecutions have yet resulted from the proscription, in July 1934, of the Communist Party of India and its auxiliaries confirms the current belief that its only effect is to drive such persons underground, where their nefarious activity is admittedly beset with difficulties but is not rendered impossible. Longer experience will probably show, as it has in the case of Bengali terrorists, that more adequate measures (on the lines of those now in existence in



the most favoured provinces) are necessary, if the activities of leading Indian Communists are to be effectively curbed.

### **The Efficacy of Special Legislation**

For the rest, the Government's programme of temporary legislation, not only succeeded in closing a number of loopholes in the permanent law of the land and in accelerating the dispensation of Justice, but also furnished harassed authority with those reserves of power which alone can make for confident, and, therefore, generous administration. With the completion of the programme, India had no lack of weapons with which to combat every form of subversive movement which threatened her peace and prosperity, not least of which is Communism. That a few are faulty and others unwieldy where Communism is concerned is a matter for some regret – for every weak link inevitably detracts from the value of a chain; but this is the less surprising when it is remembered that the chain was forged for use against a different movement, in the make-up of which secret activity played a comparatively minor part. That it has its effect on Communism as well is demonstrated in a variety of ways, and there are several pieces of independent testimony to the good which the new legislation did in a general way to check the growth of this noxious weed. Thus a prominent member of M.N.Roy's party wrote in 1932 to his friends in Berlin that, "the trades-union movement is practically at a standstill owing to the abnormal conditions prevalent under the Ordinance regime." He had previously made it clear that the "trades-union movement" of which he was writing consisted of a series of general strikes quite different from the "sporadic strikes of a purely defensive character" which had taken place in various places during the year. So, too, one of the members of Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar's group, having surveyed the situation in Bengal immediately on his return from abroad, wrote to one of his colleagues in England: "You will be glad to learn that our poor friend has got a baby. It is 4 months old now. The baby was not quite O.K. when it was born, but with proper care it is gradually gaining health. But the baby is so very sick that we are afraid it may be pretty difficult to

make it survive the cold weather, specially P.B. I'll send you a photograph of the baby". The "baby" is a Communist paper, called *Sarbharat*, which made its appearance in Bengal in the middle of 1931, and "P.B". (Press Bill) refers to the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, which had just been passed into law when the letter was written.

### **Supplementary Measures**

What present-day politicians delight to call "repressive measures" cannot, however, alone combat so all-embracing and all-pervasive a menace as Communism. Given adequate legal sanctions, the police and magistracy and the postal and customs services can each do something towards reducing the risk of widespread lawlessness in the trades-union and agrarian fields and can to some extent curtail or sterilize the activities of the few who show signs of misleading the many; but to quote again the words of the Indian Communist in Europe to which Sir David Petrie gave prominence\*, "the real impossible task is to stop the spread of ideas which travel without vehicle and gain momentum from resisting force". The ultimate solution of this problem is in other hands; to them must be left the task of translating into terms of Indian economics the many good features of the Communist system. As experience in Bengal has shown quite decisively that terrorism cannot be suppressed by the police alone while other parts of the administrative machine work detachedly and independently, so too, in the wider, and ultimately not less dangerous, sphere of Communist activity, effective counter measures are an impossibility unless all departments of the state combine to ensure that nothing that is harmful in the Communist creed shall be allowed to creep unchallenged into the schemes or the system which are their respective cares and conversely, that nothing reasonable is left undone to render less fertile the ground on which Bolshevism thrives and to make less imminent the dangers which it brings in its train.

## **Legitimate Trades-Unionism**

It was probably thoughts such as these which prompted the Inspectors-General of Police of all the Indian provinces, when they were in conference recently, not only to exhort the Government of India to reinforce the law of the land when the temporary legislation expires at the end of 1935 but also to press "the desirability of the development in India of a healthy trades-union movement". For this reason, the steps which have recently been taken to implement those parts of the Whitley Commission Report and of certain Geneva conventions which are capable of present acceptance, are particularly welcome. Such legislation cannot fail to strengthen the hands of legitimate trades-unionists such as Messrs N.M. Joshi and V.V. Giri who are themselves helping to pass it into law. Every step in this direction is a setback to those who point out the direct and bloody path of armed revolution as the only road to freedom and prosperity for the masses. Of like effect was the Bombay Trades Disputes (Conciliation) Act to which the provincial Legislative Council gave its assent last August. This Act provided means other than direct action for the settlement of industrial disputes and sanctioned the appointment of two permanent officials to arbitrate between employers and employees in the many minor cases of grievance which usually precede a strike. This system shows every sign of being a success and it has provided a splendid opening for those trades-unionists who are far-sighted enough to take advantage of it. To the Communist it is naturally anathema. Bengal has no such special legislation, but the results which attended Sir. John Woodhead's speech in the local Legislative Council on the subject of the recent dock-workers' strike\*—the sudden determination of Mr. Hassan Suhrawardy to intervene, the rout of the Communist leaders, hitherto supreme, and the successful conclusion of negotiations between the strikers and the employers through his mediation—are indicative of a promising future for a healthy trades-unionist movement in Bengal, if sane

\*vide : pages 255-6.

yet courageous leaders are forthcoming to devote their time and energy to controlling it. I am convinced that nowhere in industrial India need Communist principles and Bolshevik methods prevail if only other outlets can be provided for the voicing of the workers' complaints. Rather than any inherent preference on the part of the workers and the peasantry for the tenets and doctrines of the Communist International of which they have but the haziest understanding, it is the apathy of those who advocate "class collaboration" (as distinct from "class struggle") which provides the Communists with their main opportunity. At times of excitement the police can hold the ring but they cannot compel the legitimate trades-unionists to enter it.

### **Rural Indebtedness**

A number of provinces have taken steps during the past three years or so to redress an outstanding disability under which the agrarian population have been labouring for many decades. Foremost amongst the Communists' agrarian "demands" has always been the repudiation of all debts to money-lenders; the general aim of recent provincial legislation has been, therefore, to preserve the money-lender as a very necessary cog in the Indian economic machine and to protect his legitimate rights, but at the same time, to limit the extent of his inroads on the slender and uncertain income of the Indian farmer, and above all, to prevent the alienation of land in payment of debt. The distance to which the legislatures have been prepared to go in this direction naturally varies from province to province, but most provinces now have laws of this kind either on their statute books or on the legislative anvil, and each Act that is passed helps to remove one fruitful source of agrarian discontent and to that extent, makes the task of the Communist agitator more difficult. The Legislative Council in the Central Provinces, one of the first to experiment in this type of legislation, at first contented itself with the passage of permissive legislation by the terms of which money-lenders or their debtors might submit their suits to local arbitration and thus avoid expensive resort to the civil courts. Later, more forceful clauses were added which limited the amount of interest which

money-lenders might charge. The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act which has recently been passed in the local Legislative Council took longer strides towards what must be considered the ultimate goal. Besides providing for conciliation boards similar to those set up in the Central Provinces, it has laid it down; *inter alia*, that no civil court shall allow to the plaintiff any costs in respect of a suit which it entertains, if a conciliation board has previously adjudicated upon the debt in question and has pronounced itself to be "of opinion that the debtor has made to such creditor a fair offer which the creditor ought reasonably to accept". In such cases the civil court shall not allow any interest on the debt in excess of six per centum per annum on the amount which was due when the board reached its decision. This is but one of the features of an Act which contains many wholesome provisions (e.g., that no creditor can claim a larger sum than twice the amount of any sum given in loan after the commencement of the Act), and it is not surprising to find that the Communist element in the Punjab, seeing a valuable weapon slipping from their grasp, endeavoured to make the peasantry believe that the introduction of the Bill was prompted by fear and to whip up an agitation for "Debt Committees in every village" which should have as their slogan, "Cancel the whole debt". These attempts to belittle the Government's efforts at amelioration of the lot of the agriculturist later gave way, when the Bill was passed into law, to propaganda intended to "explain" the implications of the new act to the peasantry, and a *Kisan-Karza* committee has recently been established with this ostensible object. A salutary clause in the Assam Money-Lenders' Act of 1934 is also deserving of special mention. It provides a penalty for stating in the original bond a larger amount of principal than is actually given to the debtor—a fruitful source of dispute in the past. The same Act has taken the revolutionary step of laying it down that no court shall decree on account of arrears of interest a sum greater than the principal of the loan, even if the loan was made before the passing of the Act.

### **Other Indirect Methods of Attack**

In most provinces, too, considerable efforts, sponsored both by Government officers and by non-officials, are now being made in other spheres, all of which must help to diminish the chances of Communist propaganda being given a sympathetic hearing. Into this category fall a variety of schemes for rural reconstruction, for the establishment of marketing boards, for the setting up of wireless stations which will serve loud-speakers in selected agricultural centres, and for the promotion of travelling exhibitions,—all of which are helping to improve the amenities of the Indian peasant, and to remove that very lack of sophistication and of interests outside the family circle which has rendered him an easy prey to agitators of every kind. There are indications, too, that educationists are awakening to the weaknesses of an educational system which places on the labour market many more graduates than can possibly obtain employment of the kind for which their studies have fitted them. Several eminent Indians have recently made public their views on this subject. "Grave discontent and intense bitterness are increasing apace among these young men", one of them has written, "and they are in a state of revolt against the present social and economic order.... The situation is grave enough for those who remain unemployed after finishing their education, but the reaction on young men who are still receiving education is of a distressing nature". It is for this reason that steps which are now being taken in Bengal to increase the possibilities of a technical (rather than a general) education are so welcome. There are wholesome signs, also, that the nationalist press is inclined to take a more serious view of Indian Communism than was the case five years ago. For this change of attitude (if change it really be) India must tender its thanks to the Congress Socialist Party, whose activities and propaganda and association with the orthodox Communists are causing alarm and consternation in the ranks of the Congress proper which is pledged to Mr. Gandhi's creed of non-violence. If present efforts do not flag; if all those who look askance at violent methods of changing the present social and economic order combine to make it clear that such methods will not be tolerated now or in the

future: if those who serve the Crown, in whatsoever capacity, realize where the danger lies and what their responsibilities are; and if Governments are armed with reasonable powers for sparing use when occasion demands;—then it seems justifiable to hope that the Communist Party of India and its new-found allies will forever remain as isolated and impotent a body as it was from 1930 to 1933—a group of leaders without an army.

Only apathy and neglect and a complacent attitude towards it can make of Communism a serious menace to India's peace and prosperity.

## Appendix (iii)

### Ghadr Party And Its Communist Connections

#### The Kabul Centre

A considerable portion of Chapter 5 was devoted to the doings in Afghanistan of members of the *Ghadr* Party, whose headquarters are in San Francisco. It was said there that the degree of welcome which this nominally independent organisation accorded to the tenets of Communism was regulated at any given time by the state of the Party's purse. There was, moreover, an indication in that chapter that when Moscow's purse-strings were loosened, when Moscow's agents were tendering advice, and when Moscow's counsels prevailed, the Sikhs in Kabul presented a very much more formidable danger to India than when they were left to their own devices. This in itself would provide sufficient justification for including in a book on Communism a brief history of the *Ghadr* Party, but the pages which follow will also attempt to show how large a part the Communist International has played at one time or another in the growth and development of this dangerous Sikh association, and there will, I hope, be no need for an apology on this particular score.

Excerpts from "INDIA AND COMMUNISM", compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933, Revised up to the 1st January, 1935, pages 259-285. This is a "Confidential" Report prepared by the then British Government in India on early Communist activities. This chapter is entitled in this Confidential Report as "SIKH MILITANCY".



## **The Origin of the Ghadr Party**

This chapter will, therefore, be devoted to an examination of the *Ghadr* Party's activities from two other angles of vision—from San Francisco and from India. I cannot do better, as a beginning, than turn once more to Sir David Petrie's book, where it is written: "This movement, which is in the nature of a continuing revolutionary conspiracy recruited largely from Sikhs, was founded by Har Dayal in the United States of America in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the War. In 1914-15 many thousands of these rabidly disloyal emigrants returned to India, where their violent activities cost many of them their lives and still more their liberty. The movement was suppressed during the War but has never been stamped out, and there are still in the Punjab many returned Sikhs whose bitter hatred of our rule predisposes them to join with eagerness in any conspiracy aimed at the subversion of our authority."

The formation of the *Ghadr* Party in San Francisco in 1911 naturally led to a considerable increase of activity amongst disaffected Indians working in California and neighbouring States. Shortly after war was declared in August 1914, serious attempts were made by the Germans, through the agency of the ubiquitous M. N. Roy, to turn this agitation into channels favourable to themselves, and the result was a very dangerous and a very widespread Indo-German conspiracy which the British authorities in England, India, and elsewhere were at considerable pains to counteract. Their efforts were substantially rewarded in more ways than one, amongst them being the Prosecution of M. N. Roy and a number of the most prominent of the Party's leaders at San Francisco in 1915. Although there is very little of concrete result to show for this case, yet it forced many prominent conspirators into hiding in different parts of the world and, to that extent, dislocated the Party's schemes. The enemy's plots were thus rendered largely inoperative and, when the Armistice was signed, the Sikh movement again fell into the background. There it remained till the early days of 1926, when, to use Sir David Petrie's simile, the shutters were again taken down, money was plentiful, enthusiasm was unbounded, fresh members were joining, and activity was everywhere discernible.

By the end of 1927 so great had been the spread of the *Babbar Akali* spirit amongst Sikhs in Canada and America (as evidenced

not only by the character of the speeches delivered at Sikh meetings, but by intercepted correspondence and by the large sums of money remitted to India on behalf of the families of the "martyrs".) that the position had deteriorated to what it was when the *Ghadr* agitation was at its height. The *Babbar Akali* cult connoted nothing less than the bitterest hostility to the British Government, backed by violence and bloodshed, and America and Canada had thus once more become a kind of forcing-bed for the production of the hot-headed and violent type of Sikh who provides such a ready tool in the hands of the Bolsheviks or others who wish to utilize him. It was strongly believed, though there is no positive documentary proof of it, that the Soviet Government had come to the succour of the *Ghadr* Party in its extremity.

### **Early Communist Connections**

There were several good reasons for this belief, quite apart from the important fact that by that time M. N. Roy was firmly established as the Comintern's adviser on Indian affairs. The fourth Congress of the Communist International, which met at Moscow in November 1922, had been attended by two representatives of the *Ghadr* Party in San Francisco, one being the late Santokh Singh as "a delegate from India", and the other Rattan Singh of whom mention has been made elsewhere. In May 1923, these two left for India, "financed to a moderate extent by the Communist International". Their mission was to work, at the Indian end, the schemes formulated in Kabul, which included the formation of secret revolutionary societies cloaked as communal organisations, the fomenting of trouble amongst the independent frontier tribes, the assassination of British officers, and the selection of young Sikh for training in foreign military schools. The moment was opportune, for not only was the nucleus in Kabul in a flourishing condition, thanks mainly to Russian and Afghan assistance, but the *Akali* Sikh movement was then at its greatest intensity and feeling everywhere was a high pitch. During a short sojourn in India, these two desperadoes succeeded in enlisting the help of a fair number of Sikhs and of Sachindra Nath Sanyal\* and another Bengali before they were accounted for.

\* Vide page 238 for an account of Sanyal's terrorist connections.

Santokh Singh was arrested in suspicious circumstances in tribal territory at the end of the year and released on security, while Rattan Singh, deeming it wiser to break back, eventually found his way for a second time to America. His return to California seems to have coincided with the arrival there of another emissary from the Comintern, in the person of Evelyn Roy, M. N. Roy's American wife. Her presence in the States seems to have given a remarkable fillip to the moribund movement, and in Rattan Singh's case, also, it may safely be assumed that his illegal return to America in April 1925 was connected with this revival of activity and that he was acting at least as much on Moscow's as on his own behalf. His correspondence with his associates in Kabul and elsewhere placed the matter beyond all doubt. One such letter, written in December 1925, announced that fifty Sikhs were ready to proceed for work in Tashkent; another, dispatched a month later, intimated the receipt of instructions from Moscow to send ten picked men for training in the Eastern University. In regard to the latter suggestion it is definitely known that five Sikhs sailed from Mexico at the end of January 1926 and proceeded via the Continent to Moscow. Some eighteen months later further evidence was forthcoming that the spirit of disloyalty amongst the Sikh population in California was being powerfully stimulated by Moscow for her own purposes and that an extensive recruiting ground had been opened up for the supply of disaffected Sikhs who were ready to serve under the red banner of Bolshevism.

### **Rattan Singh's Second Visit to India**

Towards the close of 1925, Rattan Singh was arraigned before the American immigration authorities for having illegally entered the United States through Mexico. He absconded from bail however, and escaped to Russia whence he went on via Kabul to India, arriving on the frontier in July 1926. There is reason to believe that, at a comparatively early stage in the proceedings, the *Ghadr* Party became intolerant of M. N. Roy's control and accordingly made independent negotiations direct with the Comintern. Thus it appears that one of the objects of Rattan Singh's second visit to India was to obtain from the *Akali Dal* a definite mandate for which the Comintern had asked. During a stay, which did not exceed six months, he visited several parts of the country, including Amritsar and Calcutta, and associated with

known Communists wherever he went. There can be little doubt that he spent his time perfecting the Indian end of the schemes which he had been advancing in other parts of Europe, Asia and America during the two previous years. The chief of these was probably that which concerned the transmission of funds for revolutionary purposes, and it is known that during his brief stay in the country, a considerable amount of foreign money (not less than Rs. 50,000) was sent by one means or another to Sikhs in the Punjab. It would seem from a remark which occurred in one of his letters ("The business can only be successful if the *Kirti* is successful.") that the channel which he selected for the dispatch of such funds was the Amritsar newspaper, the *Kirti*, of which Santokh Singh (referred to earlier) was an editor up to the time of his death. It is known, too, that this paper had some Rs. 40,000 to its credit in the middle of 1927. Rattan Singh left India in January 1927 for Afghanistan, whence he was sent later to China to attempt to reconcile the conflicting Sikh parties and to reorganise revolutionary plans.

### **Sir David Petrie's Appreciation**

So much, then, for the history of the period covered by *Communism in India, 1924-1927*, on which Sir David Petrie reached the following conclusions: "The inquiry into these intrigues is still going on. Their course, as I have explained, is difficult to follow, for the reason that the conspirators themselves have no clear-cut ideas and, by their own showing, are making little headway. Nothing has come of the plan to promote frontier disturbances, or of the proposal to enlist the aid of the Bengal revolutionaries for a campaign of assassination, although Sachindra Sanyal paid several visits to the Punjab in 1924 and claimed to have enlisted many students in the Lahore colleges. In the same way, the scheme of sending students abroad for military training has never got beyond the placing at Constantinople of Teja Singh Sutantar, who has been used more as a post-box for correspondence than anything else. As a matter of fact, Sutantar, after passing his first year's examination, was expelled from the military college he was attending on the grounds of his not being a Turkish subject, and all the efforts of Fakhri Pasha, who was formerly Turkish Minister at Kabul and knew something of the doings of Sutantar and his friends, for long failed to secure him

re-admission. At no time have the facts, so far ascertained, disclosed ground for action in a court of law. The chief features are the marked revival of the *Ghadr* movement, till then a practically moribund organisation and the dispatch in its behalf of five men to Russia; the long and laborious journey of Rattan Singh across Europe to India and the starting of a strongly revolutionary and Communistic paper, the *Kirri*, with money which, there can be little doubt, has really been found from Russian sources. All these different events are clearly connected, and the intention of them is writ large on their surface . . . . Correspondence lately intercepted discloses lack of co-ordination, all-round stagnation, and a tendency to recrimination. The future of the "plot" is, therefore, not easily forecasted, as the attention of the *Ghadr* Party seems for the moment to have been distracted towards events in China. The revival, however, of a strong revolutionary spirit among the Sikhs in the United States and Canada and the growing cult of the *Babbar Akalis* afford considerable ground for uneasiness, for there is unquestionably in the Punjab an abundance of inflammable material if only the Soviet's agents could devise the means of effectively setting it alight."

### **A Diversion of Interest**

A letter, written by Munshi Singh, secretary to the *Ghadr* Party in San Francisco, to a correspondent in Kabul early in 1927, had said: "There is great need of work in China. Help is required. There our whole energy must be applied. There is a great need of a centre in China. Hence heavy expenses are being incurred this year." And so it came about that for the next year or so a great part of the American party's attention was diverted to China where Rattan Singh's efforts to bring about a reconciliation between the rival Sikh factions were watched with anxious interest by the leaders in San Francisco. A good deal of the Party's funds and energy were absorbed and India was for a time correspondingly neglected.

### **The Sustenance of Effort in America**

On the American side, however, there was no decline in enthusiasm or energy. Assisted by other Indian agitators besides

Sikhs, the Party advanced from strength to strength and its membership increased by leaps and bounds until, at the end of 1928, it was stronger than ever in California and had plenty of money at its disposal. It was fervently spreading revolutionary ideas among the farmers and labourers in the hope of wringing more and more money from them to send to its subsidiaries in India and elsewhere. In May 1929, it acclaimed the murder of Mr. Saunders, the Assembly bomb outrage and other similar crimes committed by Sikhs in India as "the first sparks of a conflagration which will shortly envelop India and will fulfil the long-cherished hopes of the *Ghadrites*". From then onwards the Party's propaganda, conducted mainly through the *Hindustan Ghadr*, took on a more strident note rising to a voluble crescendo when Bhagat Singh was hanged in Lahore in March 1931. The collections of funds on behalf of the *Kirti* and the *Ghadr* Parties also assumed large proportions and their influence in India had every appearance of growing stronger than ever.

### **A Revival of Plotting**

Meetings were held in the latter half of 1929 at which there were discussions on the possibility of starting guerilla warfare in India on Irish lines. Communications were also received from the *Ghadr* Party's representatives in Russia urging the American Sikhs to stir up trouble in India, and tentative proposals were made to overcome one obvious obstacle to the success of these plans by dispatching arms and ammunition to India and by teaching the art of the manufacture of bombs to returning emigrants. This orgy of plans and preparations synchronised with the arrival of Teja Singh Sutantar fresh from his course of military training in a Turkish academy, and there is no doubt that it was he who was responsible for the emphasis which was laid on the need for training the Party's members on up-to-date military lines. An aeroplane was actually purchased and tuition was begun under Teja Singh's direction. A bomb manual was prepared, translated into Gurmukhi (the Sikh Punjabi script), and circulated secretly to members of the *Ghadr* Party throughout the world. A series of articles from Teja Singh's pen also made its appearance in the Party's organ, *Hindustan Ghadr*. All these activities received the prior approval of Moscow.

### **Teja Singh's Programme**

A digest of a programme which Teja Singh drew up at this stage came to notice in the course of a recent search made by the Punjab police. The letter which contains it was dispatched from Panama in 1931 and was in Teja Singh's own handwriting, and there can, therefore, be no doubt of its authenticity. The whole programme he said, could not be disclosed openly, but the Communist Party of India had disclosed it\* and it only remained for him to amplify it in certain respects. The *Ghadr* Party should, he said, be divided into six sections to deal respectively with interior politics, open organisation, foreign affairs, war, finance, and economics. The programme laid down for the first section was ordinary enough and requires no comment. The Socialist Party, the *Kirti* and *Nau Jawan* organisations were said to be "the water of the fountain" of open organisation, and it was the duty of the second section to make this water "flow along one channel". The functions of the third section were outlined as being the formation of connexions with other friendly Governments and the supply of every sort of aid at the commencement of a mutiny. The war department was to attempt to meet military requirements, to prepare men through military training, and to carry on secret work in conjunction with the second section presumably amongst Indian soldiers. Its functions were summarized at greater length in the following words: "(a) recruitment of students (that it is very difficult to get firm-minded and patriotic men is well-known); (b) to get men educated in foreign countries (this, too, is a lengthy task, the most speedy method of doing this work is to secure the education of a few men and send them, under some cover, to impart training to others); (c) to teach, both in and out of the country, military and bomb work to as large a number of men as possible; (d) to collect military plans and to study the sites of all Indian cantonments, bridges, railways, and the telegraph system, and ascertain from what place operations should be directed, from where attacks should be made, where safety measures should be adopted and with what number of troops, and whence supplies should be obtained." The letter contained no details of the

\* From the date of the letter, the reference seems almost certainly to be to the Draft Platform of Action (Appendix II).

functions of the last two departments, presumably because they are self-evident. This interesting document has thrown much light on events which have occurred during the past four years, some of which have been referred to in this and previous chapters. That the full programme is highly visionary was admitted by its author, who was disinclined to reveal it in its fullest form to any but a very select few. This fact did not, however, prevent him, and his colleagues, from making a beginning, as we have seen, by dispatching students to Moscow, by attempting to arrange for the importation of arms through Kabul and in many other ways. Teja Singh is clearly one of those who believes that the visionary of today is the realist of tomorrow.

### **Returning Emigrants**

From November 1929 onwards, large batches of Sikhs, including both members of the *Ghadr Party* and others who were known to have subscribed to various anti-British funds, returned to India from the United States of America and Canada. Whether their return in such unusually large numbers had any political significance or not it is difficult to say, but it may be taken as certain that a considerable number of the returned *émigrés* had received instructions prior to their departure to get into touch with Sikh extremists in the Punjab. Some, it is known, brought money with them; others conveyed instructions from the headquarters in San Francisco, and there was undoubtedly a leavening of those whose function it was to prepare and organise against the time when the receipt of arms and other sinews of war should give the signal that the day had arrived for raising the standard of revolt. Fortunately, the names of a large number of those most immediately involved in the conspiracy were known to the authorities in India, so that their powers for evil were seriously restricted by the attentions of the police.

### **Reactions in the United States of America to Events in India**

The spread of the Civil Disobedience Movement in India in 1930 was responsible for imparting not only fresh impetus to the agitation in America, but also more definite shape to the Party's plans, and there are many incidents to show the extreme interest



which events in India evoked in California and Vancouver. Thus, in July of that year, a meeting was held in the Sikh Temple in Vancouver to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a "War Council". While there was general agreement on the advisability of such a step, considerable discussion centred on the question of the functions of such a body in the matter of conducting Congress propaganda, and the question was left in the air till a reference had been made to California. At a subsequent meeting, at which two visiting members of the *Ghadr* Party were present, it was decided that such a council should be formed to conduct pro-Congress propaganda, provided that its members always bore in mind the fact that the freedom of India was only to be obtained by revolution and a great sacrifice of life. If Mr. Gandhi succeeded in obtaining for India a Dominion constitution such as Canada enjoyed, these visitors said they would congratulate him, but the *Ghadr* Party's work would continue nevertheless; if he failed, the *Ghadr* Party would take up the struggle from where he broke off. At the same time invitations were issued to any Indians in Canada who wished to prepare themselves for the coming revolution in India, to visit the United States and take any course that they might select, from the *Ghadr* Party's military and explosives expert. Teja Singh Sutantar, by whose training in Constantinople the Party set much store. In response to this invitation, three young Sikhs went from Canada to California for the purpose mentioned. Such recruits were required to take an oath before they were initiated into the mysteries of bomb manufacture, the oath being to the effect that they bound themselves to "deal with" *jholi chuks* (Government supporters) on their return to India.

### **An Official Offensive**

Teja Singh was ordered by the United States immigration authorities to leave the country in January 1931 and he embarked on an extensive tour of the Sikh colonies in Panama, Brazil, and the Argentine, where he claims to have established vigorous branches of the Party and to have collected large sums of money. Some part, at least, of those claims has been substantiated. There is, for instance, reliable evidence of the fact that collections in the Argentine from the date of Teja Singh's arrival there till the end of May 1934 amounted to about £7,000. Nearly half of this sum was

spent on "educational expenses", which presumably means the dispatch of Sikh students to Moscow. Teja Singh's deportation was the beginning of a systematic campaign by the Immigration authorities, whose object was to deal with the question of Indians illegally residing in California and to break up the smuggling rings, some of which were known to be operated by the *Ghadr* Party. The prospect of such a campaign greatly alarmed the leaders, and any Indian who assisted the authorities as interpreters or otherwise were openly threatened at the Party's meetings where revolvers were freely drawn. Eventually a number of these interpreters were murdered and shooting affrays became of such frequent occurrence that for some months an acute state of terrorism prevailed in the Sikh colony in California. In only one case was the murderer arrested and brought to trial. The State officials in California, anxious that action should be taken against so dangerous an association, searched the Party's offices on more than one occasion and arrested the President, Nidhan Singh. Representations were made to Washington that the Party was a Communist organisation but, possibly for political reasons, the recommendations were not accepted in Washington and Nidhan Singh was ultimately released.

### **Sikh Students in Moscow**

The expulsion of Teja Singh and the subsequent need for caution on the part of the others, the barrenness of tangible results in India, the close and patient attention which the Punjab authorities paid to returning emigrants, the frustration of their schemes by official watchfulness and timely action, and a growing suspicion that the funds which they were sending to India were being diverted to improper uses, proved a fruitful source of disheartenment to the leaders in San Francisco and the centre of *Ghadr* activity shifted to Europe and more particularly to Moscow. I have already mentioned in that section of Chapter 5 which dealt with Rattan Singh's letter\* that the writer was in Berlin at the beginning of 1932 and that he attached great importance to the arrival of young enthusiasts from the Argentine

\* Vide pages 42-4.

for training in Moscow's academy. Teja Singh was still in South America at this time, and the concerted action of these two agents of the Comintern (as they then became\*) gave rise to an arrangement by which an annually increasing number of the *Ghadr* Party's recruits were dispatched to Moscow for a year's training in espionage, sabotage and other equally dangerous forms of secret work. Rattan Singh's letter in question indicated that one Sikh from San Francisco and one from East Africa had actually passed through his hands, and that a further batch was expected from the Argentine in the near future. By the end of the year the number under training seems to have been twenty or more; a year later it was double that number; and the position at the time of writing is that, after subtracting those who have been sent out into the world as finished agents, there are still some sixty† Sikh students in "hospital" in Moscow (as Communist jargon has it). They have been drawn not only from the America and several parts of East Africa but also as intercepted correspondence shows, from Fiji and New Zealand (where the *Ghadr* Party has recently established branches), Canada and China, as well as a few from India. Rattan Singh himself seems to have escaped the effects of the Nazi *putsch* in the early days of 1933, but appears to have deemed it wiser to remove his headquarters to Hamburg, where he has greater facilities for his work as the Comintern's chief recruiting agent for prospective officers in the *Ghadr* army of the future. Lest it be thought that this is perhaps an overstatement of the case, it would be as well to add that it is known on good authority that the course which these students undergo includes revolver, rifle and machine-gun practice and instruction in the art of assuming the leadership of rebellious mobs.

\* There is well-documented evidence that both Rattan Singh and Teja Singh have consistently taken their orders from Moscow for the past three years.

† This figure does not take account of a few Indians (non-Sikhs) who have been collected from other sources from time to time during the past five years (e.g., those referred to on page 178).

## **The Indian End**

I now pass on to an examination from the Indian end of the various schemes already revealed. By the middle of 1928, Rattan Singh's mission in China had ended in failure and India had begun once more to receive the undivided attention of the headquarters group in America. But it was some time, nevertheless, before there were reactions in the Punjab by any means commensurate with the revival of enthusiasm already noticed in the United States of America. In the meantime, the Punjab branch of the *Ghadr* Party had been renamed the *Kirti-Kisan*\* Party and its professed aims and objects were : "(1) to achieve complete independence from British Imperialism by employing every possible method in order to liberate the workers and peasants from political, economic, and social serfdom and to establish their united democratic power; (2) to organise the workers and peasants." The Party's efforts were, however, mainly confined to the Lahore and Amritsar districts and did not at first command a very great measure of success. In mid-September 1928, for instance, Sohan Singh "Josh", of later notoriety as Philip Spratt's Punjabi accomplice, and Bhag Singh "Canadian" produced a flamboyant poster, which bore the unmistakable signs of Communist teaching, to advertise a workers' and peasants' conference to be held at Lyallpur at the end of the month. The conference was duly held but proved to be a very limited success. S.A. Dange, Spratt, Bradley and a number of other attractive speakers had been billed to attend, but no extra-provincial Communist of any importance put in an appearance. While the rural members of such an audience as there was undoubtedly appreciated the recitation of their grievances, the effect proved entirely ephemeral and the conference failed conspicuously to achieve its chief object, which

was to capture the support and sympathy of the rural classes of a district with unenviable political traditions. On the other hand Communist doctrines were proclaimed with more candour than on any previous public occasion and anti-Government and anti-British statements held strident away.

### **Outside Assistance**

Such early activities as there were, were built on the efforts of a few men such as Sohan Singh "Josh" with the outside support of George Allison and Philip Spratt, and when the arrests prior to the Meerut case removed these props, the structure thus built collapsed. It will be convenient to mention here another of Moscow's endeavours to assist this nascent movement in the Punjab. In August 1928, information was received in India that Harjap Singh and another Punjabi had recently left Moscow for India travelling via Afghanistan. Harjap Singh was one of the five Sikhs who left Mexico for Moscow in January 1926, for instruction in Bolshevik propaganda and was, besides, one of the most dangerous members of the Sikh revolutionary conspiracy abroad. Fortunately, both he and his companion were arrested by the Afghan authorities while attempting to cross the Russo-Afghan border and their plans were thus frustrated for the time being. Harjap Singh had been contemplating a return for some time and he actually visited Paris in 1927 in the hope of obtaining a false passport. Santa Singh, another of the five students, who had accompanied Harjap Singh on this earlier venture, succeeded in getting away to India, where he was captured and interned shortly after his arrival.

### **After Meerut**

That the party was slow to recover from the effects of the Meerut arrests is shown by the fact that a meeting was held in the office of the *Kirti* in Amritsar in December 1929, with the object of "reorganising" the *Kirti-Kisan* Party, the implication being that nothing had been done in the recent past. The work of formulating a new programme was entrusted to a sub-committee and it was decided to hold an all-India *Kirti-Kisan* conference at Lahore at the same time as the annual session of the All-India National

Congress. As it so happened, this latter conference proved to be a turning point in the Party's career.

### **The Lahore Congress**

Held in an atmosphere surcharged with violent revolutionary feeling the like of which India had probably not seen since the Mutiny, the Lahore Congress inevitably called forth an unprecedented amount of enthusiasm for the Communist programme which it advocated. Many extremist bodies, of which the *Kirti-Kisan* Party was but one, held miniature congresses of their own and discussed and passed hundreds of resolutions, many of them of an extremely violent character. All such showed themselves ready vigorously to pursue any activities which Gandhi and the Congress chose to prescribe, provided they were capable of being conducted into revolutionary channels; but they were clearly intolerant of the control even of such hot-heads as Jawahar Lal Nehru then showed himself to be. Although much of the artificial excitement engendered at Lahore evaporated when those present there had dispersed to their homes, yet the proceedings gave considerably more lasting impetus to all extremist movements and to all activities comprised within the expression coined there, "dangerous thinking and dangerous living".

### **Civil Disobedience**

There can be no doubt that the body which emerged from the Lahore Congress under the name of the Indian National Congress was the product of an alliance between extremists and revolutionaries, such as the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha* and the *Kirti-Kisan* Party, or that, among the methods brought into play by the new orientation of the Congress creed, were the exploitation of the prevailing *Kirti-Kisan* sentiments and the employment of youths and students to work on their behalf. This being so, it is hardly surprising that it is a matter of extreme difficulty to disentangle from the history of the next few months the part played by each of the forces contributing to disorders which affected the Punjab no less than the rest of India. By no means can it be said that the general body of the Sikh worked with the Congress, but the attitude of this virile community occasioned

many anxious moments, particularly after their Sisganj Temple in Delhi had been accidentally struck by police buckshot in May 1930, and there were several indications that the earlier teachings of the *Kirti* group had not fallen entirely on barren ground and that, in certain places, Communist ideas had begun to leaven the minds of the Sikh peasantry. Indeed, the return of large numbers of Sikh emigrants at this time caused the *Kirti* Party to talk on more than one occasion of a revival of the *Bahbar Aka'i* movement and to request the parent body in America to support the venture with more men and more money. On the whole, it may be said of this period that the *Ghadr* Party was content to let the Congress undermine the Government while it for its part, extended its influence amongst the Sikh peasant population. Had the Civil Disobedience Movement produced a sufficiently chaotic state of affairs, the *Ghadr* Party, with Moscow at its back, would certainly have stepped in and attempted to use the Congress movement for its own ends with the ultimate object of absorbing it.

### **Harjap Singh Again**

Dismayed by this seeming absence of activity in India (as has been explained, such as there was quite indistinguishable from the more general Congress movement), the *Kirti* Party's masters in America sent Harjap Singh again to India in June 1930, and on this occasion he successfully evaded the attention of the authorities and arrived in the Punjab when the Civil Disobedience Movement was almost at its height. His mission was to report on the uses to which *Ghadr* funds were being put; to organise *Kirti* groups in the villages; to select young Sikhs for military training in Moscow; to spy on military organisations in the Punjab; to suborn Indian troops, if possible; and generally to prepare for an open armed revolution. He contrived to avoid arrest until the middle of April 1931, when he was interned as a State prisoner under Regulation III of 1818; but he was released in April 1934 on his giving a written undertaking that he would eschew all revolutionary activity in the future,

### **Dasaundha Singh**

While Harjap Singh was working secretly, the open organisation of the *Kirti-Kisan* Party was being carried on more

vigorously than ever by Dasaundha Singh, an active member of the main party with both American and Chinese experience behind him. He had been sentenced in 1926 by the Supreme Court in Shanghai to one year's imprisonment for being in possession of seditious literature and for inciting disaffection among the King's subjects. He was deported to India on the expiry of this sentence and was dealt with on arrival under Regulation III of 1818 in the same manner as was Harjap Singh some three years later. He was, however, released from confinement in April 1929, whereupon he quickly stepped into the shoes which Sohan Singh "Josh" had perforce left empty a month earlier.

### **The Karachi Congress and After**

By March 1931 the *Kirti-Kisan Sabha*, as it then came to be called, was once more in a flourishing condition. The session of the Indian National Congress which was held at Karachi in that month gave it further opportunities of making its revolutionary voice heard, and together with its ally, the aggressively revolutionary *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha*, from which it was then hardly distinguishable, it organised a simultaneous joint conference. The aims of these two *sabhas* were very closely allied, each contained Muslims and Hindus as well as Sikhs, and it soon became clear that both were equally dissatisfied with Mr. Gandhi's "surrender" to Lord Irwin in March 1931. It was clear, too, that their extremist programme made a considerable appeal to those "political" prisoners who had been released as a result of that "surrender" and that the strength of both parties was being greatly reinforced thereby. In an article which appeared in the official organ of the *Kirti-Kisan Sabha* just before the Karachi Congress, Mr. Gandhi was severely criticized for overlooking the interests of the workers, and the villagers were called upon to start their own *sabhas* in different parts of the Punjab and to struggle for the rights of their class against the "atrocities" perpetrated by executive officials as well as capitalists, both Indian and British. For two months thereafter, the peasant problem in the Punjab made worse by the then prevailing economic depression, gave rise to grave apprehension and cause for constant official watchfulness. It was feared that a movement such as that which the *Kirti Party* sought to initiate would occasion considerable embarrassment to the authorities generally, even if the police were



able to thwart the Party's known intention of doing something "practical".

### **The Collapse of the Movement**

But at the end of May, the Government of the Punjab announced certain remissions of revenue which undoubtedly came as a very real relief to that section of the agricultural population which had been hardest hit and which was, therefore, most susceptible to Communist promises of a Utopia in the making. Although the *Kirti-Kisan* Party made strenuous efforts both to take credit for these remissions and to decry them as niggardly, yet there can be no doubt that Government's gesture took much of the wind from the party's sails. The process of emasculation thus begun was continued by a series of judicious arrests and prosecutions and by a prudent use of the preventive sections of the law. A series of conferences held at the close of 1931 proved a comparative failure when measured by the earlier events in Karachi, and by the end of the year, what had shown early promise of being a most dangerous movement had been so weakened by official pressure of one kind or another that the achievement of even a part of its objects was placed beyond the bounds of practical politics. The failure of a conference held at Sargodha in January 1932, to which leaders from outside the province had been invited, marked the virtual end of the campaign. The *Kirti-Kisan Sabha's* preachers had, however, penetrated almost every village in the Sikh districts and had taken to the cultivators' doctrines which might well have been expected to make an appeal in the temporarily impoverished areas where they were preached. That they failed to do so is due as much to the Government's counter attack as to the fact that much of the propaganda used was far above the heads of the simple rustics for whose consumption it was concocted.

### **Internal Strife**

Thereafter decay set in. More recent efforts on the part of Bhag Singh "Canadian" to extend the sphere of the Party's influence and activities to Calcutta, Karachi and Jamshedpur, and to other places where Sikh colonies exist, met with failure; the formation of a "League Against Imperialism" in which both *sabhas* could

unite, was mooted at the end of 1932, but the proposal came to nothing. This League was to be divided into three sections— a terrorist group, a group for propaganda work and a labour group—in order to give to all those who, it was hoped, would join its scope to exercise their special talents. The discussion of organisational details revealed a marked clearage of opinion between the Muslims and the Sikhs, however, and provoked a serious split in the ranks of the *Kirti-Kisan* Party. The rift was widened in February 1933, and a stormy meeting, some six weeks later, completed the process. The *Kirti-Kisan* Party became once more a purely Sikh body with a man named Gurdit Singh at its head, and the Muslims, under Feroze-ud-Din Mansur endeavoured to set up a new organisation, styled the "Anti-Imperialist League", which was to establish connexion with similar Communist bodies in other parts of India. So, too, the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha*, on whose membership both Sikhs and Muslims cast envious eyes, was racked by communalism and consequent internal wrangling, and financial stringency added still further to its troubles.

### **Funds from Abroad**

Meanwhile, however, funds continued to arrive from *Ghadr* sources in America and elsewhere in fairly substantial quantities and by various ingenious routes the discovery of which became a matter of increasing difficulty. A banker's draft for Rs. 35,000 from San Francisco in favour of a returning emigrant, a number of small subscriptions and donations from abroad to the *Kirti* newspaper, a contribution of £50 from Sikhs in Fiji to the funds of the Workers' and Peasants' Party,—these are a few examples of obviously suspect sums in respect of which proof of evil intent was insufficient to warrant a seizure. Fortunately, the movement which such funds were intended to promote benefited by their arrival only to a limited extent. At the end of 1932, control of the Party's finances was in the hands of Dasaundha Singh, Feroze-ud-Din Mansur and two others, and about this time charges of maladministration and misappropriation were levelled against them. Dasaundha Singh was eventually forced to produce the account books for inspection and, although the examination was conducted with the utmost secrecy unpleasant facts began to

leak out which were duly reported by interested persons to those in financial control in America. Matters were further complicated at this stage by the opportune seizure of the accounts by the Punjab police, and Dasaundha Singh's reputation rested (and still rests) under the shadow of half-proved charges of embezzlement. Supplies were subsequently cut off and the *Ghadr* Party's adherents in the Punjab were informed that further funds would be forthcoming only when there was some guarantee of an adequate return for their expenditure.

### **Communist Emissaries**

It was probably the revelation of the unsatisfactory state of affairs described above which caused the dispatch to India of Wasdev Singh, *alias* Isher Singh, already referred to\*. Entering the North-West Frontier Province early in 1933, he appeared to be directing the *Ghadr* Party's operations from a hiding place in the Punjab. A letter which he wrote to a friend in the United States showed that he was making strenuous efforts to reorganise the *Kirti* Party on an extensive scale and that he contemplated the publication of a weekly journal in Urdu and Gurmukhi for the propagation of *Ghadr* and Communist ideals. Thereafter, funds again began to arrive and it seems certain that Wasdev Singh satisfied his American paymaster that he, at any rate, was to be trusted. It is, therefore, the more fortunate that he was arrested in June of the same year and confined under Regulation III of 1818. A disquieting feature of Sikh activity during this period was another determined effort to spread the Party's influence outside the Punjab. There was, for instance, a noticeable influx of leading members into Calcutta on one pretext or another, but all, as it proved, for the one purpose—the formation of revolutionary connexions. There was, moreover, talk in Sikh circles of another returned emigrant who had settled in Calcutta in order that he might serve as a medium for correspondence between workers in northern India and Calcutta and America. Investigation of this

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\* Vide page 44.

rumour resulted in the arrest at the end of October, of a suspicious Punjabi who seemed to fit the description given. This individual proved to be Abdulla, *alias* Safdar, who had arrived in India on the 28th June and for whose arrest and internment the Punjab police had obtained a warrant. Safdar had originally joined the *hijrat* movement in 1919 and had drifted to Moscow where, in 1922, he joined the Communist University for workers in the East, in order to study for a "red" professorship. Thereafter, he worked for some time with Muhammad Ali, *alias* Sepassi, in the Indian section of the Comintern. Papers which a search of his rooms produced left no doubt of the fact that he had visited Rattan Singh in Germany prior to his return to India and that he had come on an important mission, namely to effect liaison between the Communist groups in Bengal and the Punjab.

At the same time considerable attention was also paid to the Sikh colony in Jamshedpur, Messrs. Tata and Co.'s headquarters in Bihar and Orissa, and the importance which Sikh revolutionaries are known to have attached to this branch of their work raised the strong presumption that the Party was competing with the effete Communist Party of India for Moscow's financial favours. This belief was strengthened by a credible report, which was in circulation at the time, that Rattan Singh and his colleagues in Europe had been informed that, in order to qualify for a mandate from the Comintern giving it entire control of Communist activity in India, the *Ghadr* Party must show that it had the strong support, not only of the Punjab but of the rest of India as well.

### **The Release of the Meerut Prisoners**

Internal dissension, rampant communalism, financial stringency caused by the unmasking of Dasaundha Singh, and finally the removal of Wasdev Singh and then of Safdar before they had had time to do much real harm, all left their mark on the Communist movement in the Punjab, and at the end of 1933 the two main bodies which were concerned with the propagation of the Bolshevik gospel were still in very low water. In

mid-November, however, Sohan Singh "Josh" was restored to the fold, after having served the reduced sentence inflicted upon him by the Allahabad High Court. Shortly after his arrival in Amritsar he decided to co-operate with his less illustrious fellow-prisoner Majid who was also released at the same time. The first concern of these two convicts was to amalgamate the *Kirti-Kisan Sabha* and the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha*, and it was not very long before their endeavours in this direction bore fruit. At a conference held in Amritsar on the 7th January 1934, it was decided that each group should be allowed to work on its own lines, but that all the various groups should work under one provincial body, namely the Anti-Imperialist League. The League's stated objects were, firstly, to absorb all other Communist organisations in the province, secondly, to secure complete "salvation" from British Imperialism and thirdly, to establish a national and democratic republic of labourers and peasants free from all capitalist elements. Sohan Singh and Majid were deputed to frame detailed rules and regulations.

These early successes were, however, confined almost entirely to the Amritsar district where Feroze-ud-Din Mansur had entrenched himself, and it was not until several months had elapsed that the preliminary spadework was completed and the leaders were in a position to attempt to spread the League's influence to other parts of the province. Emissaries such as Mansur, Sohan Singh, and Karam Singh Man (one of Saklatvala's recruits who was mentioned in the previous chapter) were sent to tour the province and to organise branches wherever they could. A Labour Research Bureau was also started and was responsible for the publication of a series of tracts which were not the less objectionable because they were couched in comparatively restrained terms. It was to this Amritsar group that K. N. Joglekar devoted the major part of his attention when he visited the Punjab early in 1934, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, to press Dr. Adhikari's views on Communist leaders in that province.

## The Communist Control Board

Although the Anti-Imperialist League was reborn in auspicious circumstances, Feroze-ud-Din Mansur's continued connexion with it was a fruitful source of friction. Memories of his conduct in the early days of 1933 still lingered, and efforts to heal the schism which then occurred were of no avail. Those Sikh leaders who had captured the *Kirti-Kisan* Party were willing enough to welcome Sohan Singh back, but they refused to countenance the activities of an organisation in which their old Muslim enemy occupied a prominent position. After a brief period of indecision as to what line they should take, Gurdit Singh and his colleagues embarked on a course parallel to that which Sohan Singh "Josh" was pursuing. Arbitration boards were formed in a number of centres to compose any local differences there might be between collateral branches of the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha* and the *Kirti-Kisan* Party, and the work thus begun was completed at a general meeting on the 8th April when a provincial Board of Control was formed. The functions of the Board were said to be to remould the *Kirti-Kisan* Party into a *Kirti* League and a *Kisan* League, and to demarcate the duties of the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha* as an association for revolutionary elements amongst the middle-classes. The Board was also to have complete control of the finances of these three bodies and was to endeavour to secure identity of aim and harmony of effort between them in their respective spheres of activity. A later duty with which the Board seems to have been entrusted was the prevention of encroachment by the Anti-Imperialist League upon the joint party's field of recruitment and operation. Two months after its formation, the Board dispatched a deputation to tour the province with the dual object of studying economic and political conditions in each district and uniting the scattered forces of district organisations subordinate to the N.J.B.S. or the *Kirti-Kisan* Party. They performed their task with great care and skill and suggested lines on which the Communist movement could most usefully be developed. In the course of June and July they visited nineteen districts and selected nine rural and six urban centres whereat

organisational work could suitably be done amongst peasants or industrial workers. They further suggested that twenty-five picked organisers be appointed to man these centres, and that those sent to work in the rural areas be instructed to pay special attention to army pensioners and to serving soldiers on leave in the villages, while the question of circulating suitable printed matters amongst the troops ought also to be given careful consideration. These suggestions were later accepted by the Board, which appointed two sub-committees, one to see that they were acted upon and the other to take charge of propaganda.

### **Returning "Graduates"**

Amongst the members of this central Board was one Davinder Singh *alias* Lal Singh who returned to India in the autumn of 1933 after having graduated in Moscow. With him was another student named Iqbal Singh "Hundal", and from then onwards others of their kind have continued to arrive in India at irregular intervals. Having renounced their religion when they became Communists, they are naturally not averse to the removal of their beards or *kes*\*. In such circumstances they can more easily pass as Muslims or Hindus, and there is reason to believe that a few of them have adopted Mahomedan names. The chances of discovery are still further lessened by the fact that many of them are equipped with false passports and travel documents, which are so cunningly executed in Moscow that the forgeries in them can be detected only by experts, and it is hardly surprising, therefore, that the arrival of many of them has passed unnoticed. Those who have been detected have usually travelled light. Some have come direct from Europe†; others are known to have visited East Africa on their way; and not all of them have chosen Bombay as their port of disembarkation. Once in the country, they tend to disappear and their presence is only fortuitously revealed by the

\* The long-hair worn by Sikhs as a religious duty.

† The route at present in favour is by Soviet ship from a Black Sea port via Athens to Trieste and thence onward to India. An Athens stamp on a passport is, therefore, an object of suspicion.

occasional seizure of documents drafted with the utmost care so as to give away neither their writers' identity nor their whereabouts. Ten have thus revealed their presence so far, and it is estimated that there are fifteen or twenty others at work somewhere in India who are unaccounted for. One of them is said to be Teja Singh Sutantar. Not all of them are of the same high standard for there were complaints some time ago that the direct recruits from India were of poor quality as compared with those whom the leaders in California selected, but it is an uncomfortable thought, nevertheless, that so many graduates of "Moscow University" should be at large in the country without any check upon their movements or their actions. Still more disquieting is the certainty that their number will be considerably augmented as month succeeds month.

### **Baba Jawala Singh**

The precise relationship of these returned students with the various Communist organisations at work in India is not yet known, but it is both natural and probable that their *Ghadr* origin brings them into closer alliance with the *Kirti* leaders than with those of the Communist Party of India, which, for all its assumption of the title "Section of the Communist International", has no title to the claim that it is only Indian organisation on whose activities the Comintern's hopes are founded. The most acceptable of several well-reasoned theories on the subject is that the policy adopted by Wasdev Singh is still being pursued, and that Rattan Singh's agents are endeavouring to furnish solid and demonstrable support for his earnest and persistent requests that the *Ghadr* Party be giving a charter as the Comintern's sole representative in India. Of the fact that these returning Sikhs place their services at the disposal of the *Kirti* leaders there are several indications, one amongst them being the case of Baba Jawala Singh. Having served out a sentence of transportation for life which was passed upon him in 1915 as one of the most important of the prisoners arraigned in the first Lahore Conspiracy case, Jawala Singh was released from jail at the end of 1933. He was welcomed back to the Party on his return to Amritsar and set out



in August 1934 on a protracted tour of Sikh colonies outside the Punjab, ostensibly to collect subscriptions for the relief of the families of Sikh political prisoners, but in reality, as it is known, to further the organisation of the *Kirti* groups outside the Punjab and to enlarge the circulation of the Party organ, the *Kirti*. His tour took him to Calcutta, Jamshedpur and Kharagpur (where the Bengal-Nagpur Railway workshops are situated), to Nagpur and Jubbulpore and to Lucknow, Cawnpore and Allahabad. He also visited Delhi on his way back to Amritsar. Very little is known of the results of his tour, but it is established that he regarded Jamshedpur as a most promising field and assured those at work there that he would shortly dispatch three experts trained in Moscow to help them. They would, he said, obtain employment of some kind as a cover for their real work and would be prepared, if necessary, to work as labourers on eight annas a day. There are as yet no visible signs that this promise has been implemented, but it is impossible to state with any certainty that none of the twenty unknown *Ghadr* graduates, have found their way to this important centre of Sikh industrialism. There are rumours, too, that other graduates are secretly at work in Bombay, Allahabad, Ahmedabad and several places in the Punjab, and also from time to time in Calcutta, Bikaner and Pondicherry. Though none of these rumours has as yet been substantiated in material detail, it would be absurd to deny the probability that many of them are founded on fact.

### **The Proscription of Communist Bodies in the Punjab**

The combined effect of the operations of all the Communist agencies briefly described in the last few pages was by no means inconsiderable, and the resultant situation caused the Punjab Government to follow the lead given by the Government of India. Early in September a notification appeared which declared as unlawful the Anti-Imperialist League, the Punjab *Kirti-Kisan* Party, the provincial *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha* and two other less important bodies. Their offices were promptly searched by the police, and a number of important documents and a mass of propaganda literature were seized. Thereafter all five organisations

announced their dissolution. Speeches made thereafter were of a milder order; the *Kirti* decided to publish "weak articles" in future; the flood of propaganda was stemmed; and it quickly became apparent that open Communist activity was at a standstill. Such secret activity as there was seems to have taken the form of conducting study-circles and workers' leagues, but did not amount to much; and so secretly is it being conducted that the headquarters of the Communist Party of India are experiencing considerable difficulty in discovering what it amounts to!

## Conclusion

It is recognized, on the one hand, that there is a vast difference between the plans of the *Ghadr* conspirators and their fulfilment, but on the other hand, those whose memories take them back to the days of the *Babbar Akali* movement in 1923 or even to more recent events in 1931, will find it difficult to regard with indifference the present portentous signs of secret activity. The flow of propaganda, funds, emissaries from America and Russia and elsewhere has not ceased. Grist is still being found in all parts of the world for Moscow's revolutionary mill. A few desperadoes, and a larger number of those whose dangerous potentialities are only of less degree because they lack experience, are at large in India, and there are many more of both classes in California and Moscow ready to follow these pioneers when the propitious moment arrives. There is ample evidence, over and above that which has already been recorded, that the activities described in this chapter have been the direct outcome of pressure and assistance from the *Ghadr* headquarters in San Francisco. Which is becoming more and more subservient to Moscow. Rattan Singh, the main link between the two, has, indeed, shown signs on more than one recent occasion of an inclination to short-circuit the American centre and to pass on the Comintern's orders direct to India. Dogged persistence and unbending intransigence are marked characteristics of all schemes formulated in these two places, and such schemes can only be frustrated by equal persistence and equal energy on the official side. Failure in this respect can have but one result, and the murders in San Francisco in the early part of 1931 have lifted a corner of the veil and given the world a glimpse of what that result will be.

## Appendix (iv)

### The Early Indian Communists

#### Personalities of the Early Twenties

In order to procure the requisite background against which to set the dangerous amalgamation of forces with which this chapter will deal, it will be convenient to intermingle with the narrative proper a few summarized extracts from that part of *Communism in India, 1924--1927* which Sir David Petrie devoted to the Communist movement in Bengal.

It has already been shown in Chapter 12 how Bengal was visited by Abani Mukharji, who came as a Bolshevik emissary from Chattopadhyaya's group in Europe, and by Nalini Gupta, who was sent by M. N. Roy. Both these visitors had past histories as members of the terrorist party in Bengal and were sent by Bengali revolutionaries in Europe to renew associations with their own countrymen. It will be remembered, too, that M. N. Roy himself was a terrorist pure and simple before he fled his country in 1915, and that Chattopadhyaya was advocating, in London, wholesale assassination in order to do away with British rule in India as long ago as 1909. Bengali terrorists come, almost to a man, from the respectable middle-class of Hindus, who are not disposed to accept the Bolshevik creed as a whole, though they are

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EXCERPTS FROM "INDIA AND COMMUNISM", a Confidential Report compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933, Revised up to 1st January 1935. Pages 231-258. In this Confidential Report this Chapter is entitled as: "A DANGEROUS COMBINATION"

ready enough to make common cause with almost any anti-British organisation, and particularly with one that is in a position to supply the sinews of war. Both Abani Mukharji and Nalini Gupta were, therefore, well-received in terrorist circles in Bengal. Particularly was this so in the case of Abani Mukharji, who, despite his being branded as a spy by M. N. Roy, retained the confidence of an important group of terrorists till he again left for Europe early in 1924, when the news of the institution of the Cawnpore conspiracy case was bruited abroad. He is an exile to this day. Nalini Gupta, on the other hand, remained to be convicted at Cawnpore, and, although he was prematurely released owing to ill health in July 1925, he has never been prominent in Indian Communism since his conviction. His place as Roy's agent in Bengal was taken for a very short time by Jiban Lal Chattarji, who was, within a few months of his appointment, arrested under Regulation III of 1818 on account of the very prominent part which he had played in terrorist activities in Bengal from 1917 onwards. These early manifestations of Communist activity amongst terrorists, of small importance in themselves, had in them the germ of the wider recognition amongst Bengali terrorists of the value of association with so powerful an anti-British organisation as the Communist International. Amongst those so affected was a certain Jogesh Chattarji, an important member of the *Anushilan* terrorist party of the Tippera district of Bengal, who had been confined from November 1916 till August 1920 on account of his terrorist propensities. His whereabouts were unknown from October 1923 until October 1924 when he was arrested in Calcutta on his way back from Pondicherry, whither he had been to visit the late Ram Charan Lal Sharma whose services to M. N. Roy and the Communist Party of India have already been remarked upon in Chapter 16.

### **The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association**

A good deal of information was subsequently obtained about Jogesh Chattarji which showed that, during most of the time he was absent from Bengal, he was at work in other parts of India. Much of his time had been spent in the United Provinces, and the

evidence obtained about his activities, then and subsequently, resulted in conviction along with a number of terrorists from those provinces, chief of whom was Sachindra Nath Sanyal of Benares, in the Kakori conspiracy case on the 8th April 1927\*. A document of which Jogesh tried to divest himself when he was arrested was later produced as an important item of evidence of conspiracy in that case. It contained the minutes of a secret meeting of terrorists at which it had been resolved, *inter alia*, "to preach revolutionary ideas and Communistic principles; and to gain the sympathy of workers and peasants". These papers also disclosed the existence in northern India of a revolutionary organisation known as the Hindustan Republican Association, and Jogesh Chattarji was later shown to have gone to Pondicherry to interview the late R. C. L. Sharma with the object of effecting liaison with those Communist elements which Sharma has been shown to represent.

This embryo organisation had done little more than establish itself in a few centres in the United Provinces, and most of its roots were discovered and pulled up by the Kakori conspiracy case. Some seem to have escaped, however, and the Association, which in 1929 significantly took to itself a new title—The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association—spread its tentacles to other parts of India and flourished where it took root. In the Punjab it produced Bhagat Singh, the notorious assassin who, in 1929, murdered Mr. Saunders in Lahore and attempted to kill certain members of the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi. He was hanged in Lahore in March 1931. It produced, too, the dangerous mixed gang of residents of the Punjab and the United Provinces who mined the Viceregal train in Delhi at the end of the same year (1929) in an unsuccessful attempt to murder Lord Irwin. Its members were also responsible for many minor terrorist outrages in the United Provinces, Bihar, and Bombay. Such outrages were undoubtedly the manifestations of the general

\*Jogesh Chattarji was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment and is, therefore, due for release in the immediate future.

revolutionary movement inspired and largely equipped from Bengal, the chief "liaison officer" being Batukeshwar Dutt, who, as a member of the Bengal Workers' and Peasants' Party, took an active part in the organisation of labour trouble in Howrah during 1928 and 1929. He was convicted in June 1929 of complicity in the Assembly bomb outrage and sentenced to transportation for life. Although it can hardly be said that the series of outrages for which this group of desperadoes was responsible was the direct result of Communist inspiration, yet the circumstances of the Association's inception gave clear indication of M. N. Roy's direct and indirect influence upon it, and the behaviour of its members in the long-drawn trials in which many of them later became involved revealed the depth of their study of Communist theory and history. Though their action was bred of impatience to wear the martyr's crown, their basic ideas were those of Marx and Lenin. With the removal of Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt and of a number of others of their way of thinking in Bihar, the United Provinces, the Punjab and Sind, the movement in northern India quickly lost its Communist tinge and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, though retaining the same title, reverted to terrorism pure and simple. It was subsequently broken up by means of police action against it, and its activities have since been confined to the circulation of a few leaflets from time to time; but there are present signs of a desire amongst the remnants of its membership to join hands with the "official" Communists in the prosecution of an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist programme.

### **The Genesis of Bengali Communism**

Bengali terrorists have always been somewhat vaguely divisible into two generic groups which roughly follow the old territorial division of the province; members of the *Jugantar* Party might be said, for general historical purposes, to be natives of the western districts, while membership of the *Anushilan* Party would connote residence in what was formerly Eastern Bengal. Those whose names have been mentioned hitherto belonged to the former

group\* and their work lay to a large extent outside Bengal. Meanwhile, however, the leaders of the *Anushilan* group were slowly coming to the conclusion that a handful of terrorists, however determined they might be, could never win *swaraj* for India unless they had the support of the mass of the populace. They were strengthened in this view by a glowing account of his visit to Europe which was given to them by a youthful member of their party named Gopendra Chakravarty. Chakravarty was a close friend of Jogesh Chattarji with whom he disappeared at the end of 1923; but whereas Chattarji remained in India, it subsequently transpired that Gopen Chakravarty had been dispatched to Europe by Nalini Gupta. He arrived in Hamburg in March 1924 under an assumed name, he at once got into touch with known Communists; he visited Moscow, probably in the company of M. N. Roy; and worked his passage back to India under another false name (Arjun Lal Misra) in June 1925. He then travelled slowly across India to Calcutta where he again got into touch with his old associates in the *Anushilan* Party and, filled with new-found enthusiasm, endeavoured to divert their activities into Communist channels. Like his precursors, he was well-received and there followed reports of several ambitious proposals which included the dispatch of other emissaries to foreign countries to establish contact with Communists there. That efforts were made to translate these proposals into practice is shown by the fact that four young Bengali Hindus were subsequently arrested in two batches on different dates at the Shipping Office, Calcutta, whither they had gone disguised as Muhammadans to procure seamen's certificates. Later information left the clear impression that these four persons were emissaries who were being sent to Europe for training, and that, in addition, attempts had been made to send one or two others. Most of these schemes seem to have come to nothing; but a few reached a more mature stage. One which came within the latter category was the

\*Although Jogesh Chattarji began his revolutionary career as a member of the *Anushilan* Party, his subsequent connexion with the H.S.R.A. brands him as a member of the *Jugantar* Party during the period with which this narrative is concerned.

formation at the end of 1925 of a "Depressed Classes Improvement Society", for the ostensible purpose of social service, but, in reality, as a convenient cover for mass work. As the promoters of this scheme had no means of financing it unless they obtained a share of the Russian gold which they were led to believe was shortly to be poured into India in fabulous quantities, plans were made to send an emissary to England, to arrange for the transmission of funds from the "Russian Labour Party in England". The selected envoy seems to have been Akshoy Kumar Shaha of Mymensingh who left Calcutta in February and ultimately reached Moscow. He proved a broken reed, however; having married a Russian wife, he settled down as a professor of science in Leningrad, in which capacity he remained in Russia till he was allowed to return to his Indian home at the end of 1932.

### **The Anushilan's New Programme**

By the beginning of 1926 Gopen Chakravarty had re-established himself with the *Anushilan* Party, of which he had become a leading member. He had also secured the approval of some of the then leaders to a scheme which he had drawn up for the reorganisation of the Party on lines agreeable to Moscow. It provided, *inter alia*, for organisation:

- (1) among students who were to form unions and agitate to obtain control of the educational system;
- (2) among labourers and peasants, who were to be educated in accordance with the usual Communist programme (this education was to be taken in hand by members of the terrorist party), co-operative banks being opened for the general benefit;
- (3) in the Congress, which was to be used by members of the party as a cloak for their terrorist activities;
- (4) on military lines, which included the formation of volunteer corps and athletic clubs to further military training and, also, agitation for the Indianisation of the army.

Attempts were also to be made to tamper with the loyalty of Indian troops and connexion was to be established with Moscow



through the Soviet Consuls in Java, Persia, and China, through whose good offices money was also to be transmitted to India.

### **The Prosecution of the Programme**

Organisation began forthwith under each of these heads. Students' associations were formed in several districts of Bengal; co-operative banks were opened in Tippera and Faridpur; the Congress in Bengal became more and more a cloak for revolutionary activities; and a number of volunteer corps came into existence, notably that in Calcutta whose triumphal march, with its "General" Subhas Chandra Bose, riding at its head, through the northern streets of the city was one of the best attended spectacles connected with the 1928 session of the Indian National Congress. Chakravarty laid special stress on the revolutionary aims of the party and, to further these ends, he stipulated that each department must have a secret section. He did not, however, insist on the collection of arms until the manpower had been increased but desired that advantage should be taken of any opportunity to secure arms that might occur. His programme did not include incitement to acts of terrorism, but it aimed at the gradual extension of Communism and of the influence of the terrorists over the masses, so that, when the time was ripe, a mass terrorist offensive could be undertaken.

### **The Communist Attitude towards Terrorism**

It can be shown in a variety of ways that Chakravarty's views on this subject were but the echo of orthodox Communist "ideology". From the very earliest days M. N. Roy had strenuously opposed individual terrorism as practised by Bengali terrorists. Writing to R. C. L. Sharma in 1924 he said: "We have not done anything about the automatic purposely, but I will see to it if you are so insistent. My request only is that nothing can be gained by this method of work. Look at our Bengal people. What have they gained by their recent stupidity? You cannot make a revolution so easily. First of all the mentality of the people—or at least a sufficiently large portion of it—is to be revolutionized. This cannot be done by stray pistol shots". A year later he

published in his paper, *The Masses of India*, a manifesto to "the Bengal Revolutionary Organisation of Youth" from the Young Communist International. This manifesto pointed out that the liberation of India could only be effected by a revolution of the masses, which again could only come about by the combined efforts of the revolutionary intelligentsia of the proletariat; for, on the latter devolved the task of preparing the former. Individual acts of terrorism were deprecated for the sole reason that such acts defeated their own ends. It was emphasized that it was the masses that must be trained for the fight.

This dogma was loyally upheld by the Meerut prisoners both before and during the Meerut case. All were at pains to explain that there was a clear-cut distinction between the violence for which they stood\* and the terrorist outrage of Bengali gunmen. No permanent advantage could be gained from sporadic murders and they, therefore, strongly deprecated political murders and anarchist outrages. I need not labour the point, however, for no less an authority than Joseph Stalin has put the question beyond all doubt in the following passage: "Let me reiterate the fact, which should be known to every civilized human being, unless he is an utter ignoramus or a paid agent. Let me explain that Communists never have had, and never will have, anything to do with the theory and practice of individual outrages, that Communists never have had, and never will have, anything to do with the theory and the practice of conspiracies against individual persons. The theory and practice of the Comintern is based upon the idea of organising a revolutionary mass movement against capitalism. That is the true task of the Communists"\*\*.

### **Other Bengali Terrorists**

Amongst other Bengali terrorists who flitted across the Communist stage during the period covered by Sir David Petrie's book Jatindra Nath Mitra, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Dharani

\*Vide pages 144-5.

\*\*Leninism, Page 378.

Mohan Goswami, and Soumendra Nath Tagore are worthy of mention. Jatin Mitra was dispatched by Nalini Gupta to Germany to learn the principles of Bolshevism and the cult of revolution, his expenses being borne by M. N. Roy. He returned to Bengal as Roy's *Anushilan* agent in 1925, but Roy's criticism of his work soon caused resentment and their relations with each other became strained, with the result that Mitra devoted his attention purely to the terrorist side of the party's work. From participation in a long series of terrorist activities, including deep complicity in a conspiracy with M. N. Roy and the notorious Rash Behari Bose (whose lieutenant he had been in his early days) to smuggle arms and ammunition into India from the Far East, Sachindra Nath Sanyal emerged in 1924 as the leader of the Hindustan Republican Association, already referred to, and was sentenced as such to transportation for life in the Kakori conspiracy case on the 27th April 1927. The several other sentences which he has been condemned to serve include another of transportation for life in the Benares conspiracy case in 1915, and he has shown himself during his brief spells of freedom from confinement to be a confirmed advocate of violence and a dangerous organiser of every form of revolutionary activity.

### **Goswami and Tagore**

It was Dharani Mohan Goswami's forthright advocacy of Communist principles which provoked a split in the *Anushilan* Party at the end of 1926. Forming a close alliance with Gopen Chakravarty, Goswami became a convert to Bolshevism, and of so high an order was his Communist evangelism that several of the younger members of the Party who came under his influence were impelled to break away from their old leaders, who, while they were quite ready to receive assistance from the Comintern, were not prepared to adopt all the tenets of Communist theory. At the beginning of 1927, this group, with Goswami at its head, was paying special attention to the organisation of students and labourers and one of its members had been introduced into the Bengal Jute Workers' Association at Bhatpara. In February the new group succeeded in obtaining seven seats on the executive

council of the newly formed Bengal Workers' and Peasants' Party in Calcutta, a committee of which Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad were also members. Another member of the same committee was Soumendra Nath Tagore, a grand-nephew of the famous poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, and a member of the Indian Communist Party. Soumendra had been introduced to leaders of the *Anushilan* Party by Jatin Mitra and he rapidly attained considerable importance both as a revolutionary and as a Communist. There is information on record to show that he was concerned in conspiracies to assassinate officials on the revolutionary side, while, on the Bolshevik side, he was put into touch with M. N. Roy by Nalini Gupta, with whom he became very friendly. He left India in May 1927 on a definite mission to the Comintern to obtain funds for Communist work in India and to improve the connexion between the Communist-terrorist element in India and anti-British forces abroad. Roy's downfall a year later put Tagore out of commission and he spent several years on an island off the southern coast of Italy attempting to recuperate his failing health. He returned to India in January 1934, but does not seem to have joined any particular Party. Instead, he satisfied his craving for self-expression by reviving Muzaffar Ahmad's newspaper, the *Ganavani*, and by writing a book attacking the rule of the Nazis, at whose hands he had suffered expulsion from Germany. He has also published several leaflets in favour of Communism, and has done, quite independently of any other Indian organisation, a certain amount of secret anti-imperialist propaganda amongst students in Calcutta and amongst seamen, both in oceangoing vessels and in inland steamers. The extent of this work or of its results is as difficult to gauge as is the real standing of the "Anti-Fascist and Anti-War League" which he inaugurated in August 1934.

### **Lasting Effects of Dharani Goswami's Influence**

Dharani Goswami's conversion to Communism proved to be a landmark in the history of terrorism in Bengal. From the end of 1926 onwards the penetration of terrorist bodies went steadily on,

side by side with the organ-isation of those whose violent inclinations were of a less impulsive kind, who preferred to await the day when an armed mass rebellion was more possible of attainment. The formation of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in 1927 was followed a year later by the appearance of a Socialist Youth League of which the founder was the late Santosh Mitter, the head of another group of terrorists, who was shot by the police in the course of the disorders in the Hijli Detention Camp in 1931. With the inauguration of this League there were associated Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutt, a prominent figure in the revolutionary history of Bengal, whose Communist tendencies date back to the autumn of 1920, at which time he was in Europe under Moscow's direct influence. Towards the end of 1928 came the Young Comrades' League with Dharani Goswami at its head and within its ranks a large number of terrorists, many of whom have subsequently been placed under detention on account of their revolutionary proclivities. The institution of the Meerut case struck a severe blow at all these organisations, but, when those who survived it had recovered from the shock, there sprang up in Calcutta an organisation known as the *Samvaraj* Party consisting at first entirely of members of the old Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. This party gradually attracted to it a number of members of other terrorist groups in and around Calcutta and obtained control of six workers' unions in the City. It grew in strength until, in the middle of 1932, internal dissension, inevitable apparently in Bengali politics, severed its ranks. The immediate point at issue was the question of secrecy. Badal Ganguly, one of the party's leading lights, acting on instructions from Bombay and Meerut (where a number of accused were on bail at the time), insisted that the party must go underground. Aghore Sen, another of the party's leaders, on the other hand, was equally insistent that salvation lay only in open propaganda. The two parted company, Aghore Sen to continue to control a depleted party and Badal Ganguly to join hands with the Indian Students' Group the first of whose envoys had made his

appearance in India a few months previously and of which more will be written at a later stage in this chapter.

### **Widespread Terrorist Acceptance of Communist Theory**

Although there is no evidence that M. N. Roy established personal touch, during his brief sojourn in India in 1931, with any Bengali terrorists other than Subhas Bose and those who accompanied him to Karachi, yet it is a strange fact that it was not till then that his views began to find anything like general acceptance amongst members of the *Anushilan* and *Jugantar* Parties. Whether it was the result of Roy's influence or whether it was a more or less spontaneous reaction to current events it is difficult to say, but the early months of 1931 witnessed a remarkable manifestation of the Communist spirit amongst all classes of terrorists in Bengal. The change first expressed itself in a sudden thirst for knowledge of Communist theory and history on the part of *détenus* in the various jails and detention camps up and down the country wherever Bengali terrorist were confined. The leaders of both parties, *Jugantar* and *Anushilan*, lectured their following in the jails. The demands for Communist literature exceeded all bounds, and when it was refused by the authorities it was smuggled in by sympathetic extraneous hands. Many of the messages which *détenus* carried (sometimes verbally, sometimes otherwise) from one jail to another emphasized the importance of spreading the doctrines of Communism amongst the rank and file. Some leaders there were who demurred, but as time went on their following decreased and they themselves fell into line. Thus, in a comparatively short space of time, a considerable number of known members of the *Anushilan* Party, and a fair number of the *Jugantar* also, had been weaned from ideas of individual terrorism to Moscow's doctrine of mass uprisings at the appointed time, and a beginning had been made in placing them under trained Communist leadership. The process is still going on at the present time, and the full effect of this continuous instillation of Communist theories into callow minds already filled with racial

hatred can only become apparent when the 2,500 Bengali terrorists now under detention begin to trickle back to their town and village homes.

### **The Manifesto of the Hindustan Samyavadi Sangha**

This metamorphosis had embraced so large a percentage of terrorists by the end of 1932, that Subhas Bose, fearing, no doubt, that he would otherwise lose control of the following by which he set such store, decided to subscribe to a Communist programme. At the beginning of October there appeared in Calcutta, a document which called itself "The Task Ahead (Manifesto of *Hindustan Samyavadi Sangha*)". Its authorship is variously ascribed to Jibanlal Chattarji, who, it will be remembered, was M. N. Roy's agent in Bengal for a very short period in 1923, and to Subhas Bose himself, but the preponderance of evidence points to Bose having drafted it himself. It consisted, for the most part, of a lengthy and one-sided recital of the political history of India in its relation to the larger world movement, interspersed with the conclusions which the writer wished to be drawn therefrom. At one stage much was made of the point that "non-violence, as it has been preached by the followers of Tolstoy, has no place in Hindu philosophy, while the teachings of the *Gita*—the central scriptures of the Hindus—are directly opposed to it"; at another of the need "to fight on every front—to attack every weak point of the enemy and..... always to remember that the enemy's difficulty should be our opportunity". The collapse of the Burma rebellion was cited as an illustration of the need for the combination of the peasants and the townsfolk; events in Chittagong of how arms may be captured and of how, if the surrounding population are friendly, it is possible to evade arrest even if the whole countryside is "scoured by the military and the police over and over again".\* The conclusion reached in regard to the army was that, "as in Russia, the rank and file of the Indian section of the army are recruited from the peasantry and, if there is a peasants' movement in the country, even the hitherto loyal Indian

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\*The arrest of Surya Sen in Chittagong shortly afterwards should have done much towards shaking the foundations of this theory.

Army may be infected through the mass movement appealing directly to their class interests, and one can expect the Indian troops to sympathize or fraternize with the revolutionary masses." The causes of the failure of Gandhi's non-co-operation movement were assessed under twelve different heads, the chief of which were, that it tended to make a fetish of non-violence, that it preached the amelioration of the conditions of the peasantry and labouring classes but failed to indentify itself with their interests as against those of the landlords and industrial capitalists, and that it stood for an adjustment of interests and not for a radical transformation.

### **The Sangha's Programme**

The *Sangha's* programme was nowhere clearly set forth but could be gleaned from certain "conclusion~~s~~s" which were drawn from time to time. Of these, two important passages may be quoted: "If the fight for freedom is to succeed certain things have to be done—

- (1) the army of occupation must be engaged so that it may not be able to concentrate its forces in one locality;
- (2) a section at least of the standing army must be won over to the popular cause;
- (3) the fight must be carried on simultaneously in the towns and villages;
- (4) the civil administration must be simultaneously undermined and paralysed;
- (5) a *de facto* people's government must be set up;
- (6) last but not least, international recognition must be forthcoming for this *de facto* people's government. ...

How to fulfil the above six tasks is the problem which awaits solution at our hands."

The other passage, which also speaks for itself, was the following: "The party organisation throughout the country should follow the lines of governmental organisation and should aspire to become in due course a parallel Government—a State within a State. The centralized party should have different departments working among different sections of the community. There should, therefore, be separate departments for (1) peasants, (2) labourers,



(3) youths, (4) women, (5) members of the depressed classes, (6) a separate organisation for every minority community in the country, and (7) volunteers. Every discontented and exploited individual or group should be approached and won over to the popular cause. Patient work and persevering toil will be necessary for the purpose." (A previous passage had suggested the need for suborning the civil employees of Government in order to penetrate the intelligence system, and had pertinently asked, "How can the enemy be defeated unless you know beforehand what the tactics and plans of the enemy are?"). In his own handwriting, Bose commended this programme, not only to his own dwindling following in Bengal but also to his friends in Bombay and Sind. Communist were to be preferred to terrorist methods. India's independence was still a long way off and terrorists (as they were then known) must be induced to hold their hands in patience against the time when the masses could be organised and armed for the final civil war and social revolution. Meanwhile, *Samya Sudans* (Houses of Equality) were to be set up in every district and sub-division. Later on, when sufficient men were forthcoming to work in a wider field, the party must "go to work among the labouring classes, cultivators, depressed classes and women on an intensive scale" and must seek also "to undermine internally the forces of the enemy". Eventually would come the final blow to bureaucracy in all its forms—the engagement of the military on all fronts simultaneously and the wrecking of the civil administration.

### **The Madras Conspiracy Case**

Shortly after this programme was circulated, Subhas Bose was allowed to proceed to Europe on grounds of ill-health and did not remain to see his scheme to fruition. It had, of course, much in common with the programme which the Congress Socialist Party later evolved—indeed, there is reason to believe that M. N. Roy's doctrines provided the inspiration for both—but the new party's record of accomplishments was exceedingly small. Only in Madras did its activities bring it to official notice. Both Jibanlal Chattarji and Batukeswar Dutt were serving their sentences in the

Trichinopoly jail where also Mukunda Lal Sircar, the then secretary of the All-India Trades Union Congress, was imprisoned.\* During the latter half of 1932 these Bengalis held regular classes and lectured their Madrassi fellow-convicts on revolutionary policy and methods. Bhagat Singh and his comrades were extolled as national heroes; political assassinations and dacoities were justified on philosophical grounds; instruction was given in the making of bombs; and oaths of service to the motherland were administered to a large number of Madrassi political convicts just prior to their realease. At the end of the year, Mukunda Lal Sircar communicated Bose's new programme to this group, and on his release a few months later, he lost no time in informing Bose of the enthusiastic reception of his scheme and offering his own support, and that of the All-India Trade Union Congress, to the *Samyavadi Sangha* then in the making. By the middle of May 1933, a large number of those who had fallen under these malign influences had regained their freedom, and all were pledged secretly to enlist most members. At this point a meeting was held in Madras at Mukunda Lal Sircar's suggestion, to review the position and to map out a plan of campaign. A proposal to call the party "The Hindustan *Samyavadi Sangha*" was eventually discarded in favour of the older and more high-sounding name "The Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, Madras Branch". The "Army's" object was declared to be the establishment of a socialist form of republic in India, by means of an armed rebellion. The party already possessed some revolvers and ammunition, secured from Pondicherry, and more were to be collected and paid for by the proceeds of a series of dacoities and robberies which were then planned. Organisers were appointed for different areas, party names were given and secret symbols were agreed upon for such words as "firearms", "assassinations" and "dacoities". The conspiracy ran for two months more, when it was brought to light by the arrest in Madras of two of its members who were about to proceed to the interior of the Presidency to commit an armed dacoity. Investigation revealed the fact that the new party's activities extended to no less than twelve districts, and resulted in the arrest of twenty-three of the more prominent of its

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\*Vide page 211.

members on a charge of conspiring violently to overthrow the Government. Twenty of them were eventually sent for trial by the High Court, of whom seventeen were convicted and sentenced on the 24th April 1934—Mukunda Lal Sircar (whom the judge described as “the brain behind the conspiracy”) to four years’ rigorous imprisonment, and the remainder for lesser periods.

### **The Absence of Official Communist Inspiration**

Roy's influence is so apparent in all this that it is unnecessary to seek the hand of Moscow in the sudden transformation which took place in 1931 and 1932, and which culminated in this attempt to establish a new revolutionary organisation. Nor, in fact, is there any suggestion that the hidden hand is there, beyond a brief note from the pen of Muhammad Ali, *alias Sepassi*, of the Comintern's Eastern Secretariat, which appeared in *The Communist International* (a London journal) of the 1st February 1931 and which ran as follows:—“The programme prepared by the Communist Party of India will help it draw also to its ranks and round its banner that revolutionary stratum of the city petty *bourgeoisie*...which are engaged in terrorist attempts. The terrorist activities of these revolutionary youths have increased very much during the year”. Moscow was, therefore, alive to the situation but it would be more than a little difficult to reconcile the vociferous condemnation which all her propagandist organs have persistently showered on Bose, not only as a Congressman but also for his trades union activities, with the grant of her general blessing to a scheme which bore the stamp of Bose's authorship.

### **Moscow and Indian Students in England**

There is, however, one side of Moscow's present activities which is extremely germane to the present subject and which falls to be dealt with at this juncture. Amongst the papers seized by the London Police when they raided the headquarters of the Communist Party of Great Britain in King Street, Covent Garden, in 1926 were some which revealed the fact that the Communist Party of Great Britain had been making systematic attempts to infect Indian students at Oxford with Bolshevik ideas. Two

non-Indian students were the agents employed in this task. These men attended meetings of the *Majlis*, a social and political organisation intended for the discussion of Indian affairs and the promotion, of unity and comradeship amongst Indians at Oxford. Prior to the exposure of their plans, these agents had arranged for interviews between likely students and Shapurji Saklatvala, whose name needs no introduction. It was hoped that Saklatvala would be able finally to induce these youths to devote their lives to the promotion of Communism in India. The publicity which was given to these revelations in the English Press undoubtedly frightened the embryo Communists thus recruited, the majority of whom hoped at a later date to secure appointments under the Government of India; and the Communist Party of Great Britain was made to recognize the fact that further efforts in this direction, would, for the time being, prove unprofitable. Working, as always, through Saklatvala, who, with Clemens Palme Dutt, had long since come to be recognized as the expert debaucher of Indians in England, the C. P. G. B. thereafter confined its attention to such ready-made Indian organisations in London itself as might reasonably be expected to yield a harvest of workers. Chief amongst them was the London branch of the Indian National Congress (another branch in Edinburgh was never exploited to the same degree), of which Saklatvala eventually gained control in 1930 after a struggle lasting a little over two years. His triumph was shortlived, however, for this "branch of the Congress" was disaffiliated by the parent body in India in August 1931 and thereafter died a lingering death. An Indian study circle formed by Clemens Palme Dutt and others early in 1926 proved even less of a success, and interest in it soon waned, while a completely innocuous Bengali Literary Society to which Saklatvala also turned his attention met with a similar fate.

### **The University Students' Group**

Thus, thanks mainly to the good sense of the students themselves but partly to dislike of Saklatvala by the moneyed Indians on whose munificence the majority of Indian Associations in London rely for their existence, the British Communists were

compelled once more to turn to the universities. In July 1930 the Communist Party of Great Britain adopted a lengthy resolution on the subject of India, clause 7 of which read as follows: "The Party must work actively among the Indian residents in Britain (workers, sailors, students, etc), and establish the best possible connections with India through them." All the Party's subsidiary organisations, such as the British sections of the League Against Imperialism, the Educational Workers' International, and the Workers' Welfare League of India, were thereupon harnessed to the tasks laid down. Persistent endeavours were made, mainly by Saklatvala and Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar (a law student from Mymensingh who had for several years been a full and active member of the Communist Party of Great Britain) to interest Indian students in the study of Communist theory. These efforts were rewarded in the summer of 1931 when a loosely-organised body known as the University Students' Group came into being. Meetings were held at irregular intervals in Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar's house in London for the purpose of abstract discussions on Communism. The group was originally composed of a dozen members; all came of exceptionally good stock; all but two were of unimpeachable character prior to their leaving India, ten were Bengalis, and eight were related in one way or another to loyal servants of the Crown. Others who have joined the group subsequently are of the same mental and moral fibre and have the same family associations behind them. Their natural friends and associates both in India and at the English universities are numbered amongst those who have entered or are about to enter the highest branches of the Indian services and the deliberate attempt to debauch these young Indians before they reached the age of discretion is, therefore, the more subtle and the more dangerous. A travelled Indian emphasized this danger a few weeks ago when he wrote as follows in an Indian newspaper: "with the progressive Indianization of the Indian Civil Service the morale and efficiency of this historic Service have been on the wane. The same anti-British spirit in one form or another is noticed among the young Indian recruits to this Service. With the introduction of competitive examinations, all Indian successful candidates,

irrespective of their cultural and political antecedents, have been taken in... There are among them some who are closely related to politically disaffected persons: such family ties and upbringing cannot conceivably tend to make these Indian Civilians worthy standard-bearers of English political and administrative traditions."

### **Marxian Training in Berlin**

With the ground prepared by Dutt Mazumdar's theoretical training, invitation were preferred to members to attend a month's course in Marxian theory in Berlin and seem to have been accepted by about half the original membership. Papers seized in 1933 showed that the lectures had been in English and had embraced subjects as far removed from the study of Marxist theory as "the measures to be taken in India early next year (1932) in the event of the Round-Table Conference failing to give satisfaction to the demands of the extremists, including organised terror, destruction of railway bridges, boycott of British goods, a campaign against Gandhi,\* etc." Other subjects contained in the syllabus were the strategic importance of railways, roads and waterways, the vulnerability of ammunition factories and armouries, the history of peasant revolts (not only in India but also in China, Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies), and the best methods of promoting unity of action between townspeople and villagers. When intelligent students are set to study under Communist supervision, matters such as these, there is only one conclusion to be drawn, and it must be accounted fortunate that the advent of the Nazi regime caused some dislocation of these arrangements for corrupting the sons of India's intellectual aristocracy.

### **The Return to India**

Thereafter, these students began to drift back to India. Amongst the first to return were two, in particular, who lost no time in establishing touch with Communists in Calcutta. One

\*Cf. events in Calcutta described on page 202.

again left India after a stay of two months, bearing for Moscow's consumption a report on conditions in Bengal; the other, to whose orthodoxy and reliability as a Communists tribute was later paid by Dharani Goswami and others of the prisoners at Meerut, remained on in Calcutta, and under a suitable pseudonym began his work on the lines laid down in Berlin and so it now appears, dictated by Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya from Moscow. In March and April 1932 this second trained agent dispatched to London a series of reports written in an ingenious cypher the purport of which was as follows: He had assumed control of the Worker's Party of Bengal ("a strong secret Communist Party") and had made considerable headway in the way of increasing the membership. Members of his party had established some kind of a footing in eleven districts of Bengal, one of Bihar and Orissa, and one of Assam, before the end of April. The peasant "rebellion", which occurred at Hasnabad in the Tipperah district early in February 1932, was his party's work and he was giving harbour to Mukhleswar Rahman, a notorious agrarian agitator and one of the chief absconders in the case arising therefrom. The strength of Rahman's following in this district was 100,000 and a militant programme of action for an All-Bengal Peasant League had been drawn up and was shortly to be printed and copies broadcast in thousands. Similar propaganda was being conducted through two weekly newspapers. A tax-collector had been murdered at Phultala in the Khulna district. No funds had so far reached him and his activities were seriously handicapped on this account.

### **Activities of Trained Students**

Copies of these reports were discovered in the course of a search in Calcutta at the beginning of May, and other documents recovered at the same time revealed the fact that, though much of what had been written was exaggerated, the existing nucleus in Calcutta had nevertheless been extremely active. Several secret meetings had been held and co-operative alliances had been formed with several small existing terrorist and Communist organisation whose combined field of operation covered five districts of northern and western Bengal and one of Bihar and

Orissa. The rioting at Hasnabad had been indirectly engineered by the group's agents who were actually harbouring Mukhleswar Rahman, the organiser of the "rebellion". The party's object was shown to be to educate the masses with a view to a combined rising at some future date but to eschew meanwhile methods of individual terrorism. All arms and ammunition were to be kept under the control of the central body for use at a time when a mass rising was feasible and advisable. This, it may be remarked, is precisely the line which Moscow's secret planning has been taken since the Executive Committee of the Communist International evolved its notorious manifesto in 1929. One of the "tasks" prescribed therein was the steady collection and storing of arms in a central *cache* and the training of the rank and file in their use and handling; instances of the execution of this policy are forthcoming from places as far as Jerusalem and Tokyo.

### **Continued Efforts**

Fortunately, not all the original members of the group gave so good an account of themselves on their return to India. Several seem to have taken little or no part in the propagation of Communist ideas or the secret planning of rebellion. Of a score of such persons who are in the country at the time of writing, about half are giving no cause for official complaint (some from choice, others on account of parental vigilance); a few have obtained lucrative employment and have consequently confined themselves to secretly supporting the new party's aims in much the same way as U Su assists the Burmese "*thakins*".\* Evidence of the activities of the London section is necessarily fragmentary, but what little becomes available in India from time to time reveals glimpses of a flourishing organisation in more or less constant touch with the Communist Party of Great Britain, holding frequent meetings for the study and discussion of Communist subjects and producing a steady stream of subversive literature which eventually finds its way to India through well-planned

\*Vide Page 75.



hidden channels. Its members seem to shun the light of day, and the occasions on which their activities come to public or official notice are few and far between; even articles in the group's official organ are presented to the public under *noms-de-plume*. It is clear from what is happening in India, however, that recruitment is still going on—particularly so since B. F. Bradley returned from Moscow in the summer of 1934—and that the net is being spread more widely so as to include Indian provinces not hitherto represented in the group's roll of memberships—there is, for instance, already a substantial section of Muslim members from the United Provinces. It seems possible that this dangerous group is destined in the not very distant future to become Moscow's main "organisational and informational contact bureau" for her relations with the Communist Party of India.

### **A Clear Exposition of the Party's Aims**

The December (1932) issue of this group's London organ, *New Bharat* (or *Indian Front* as it now calls itself), gave a particularly clear idea of its members' real intentions when it remarked with reference to the Sholapur rioting in 1930 and similar disorders which occurred at about the same time: "One of the lessons derived from the workers' risings is that when the workers break out in revolt and strike a blow, they strike unhesitatingly, decisively. They aim their blow at the very source of imperialist oppression, at its State apparatus. But imperialism still holds the day. It relies on its reserves of strength gathered during past decades. It will not be weakened until our national liberation movement is organised on the basis of a correct understanding of its tasks, draws in the widest masses of the country, leads boldly, and acts decisively. *The three requisites—organisation, a mass basis, and decisive action—must be fused together for the success of our revolution.* And this is the task of the party of the working class."

### **Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar and the Labour Party**

In August 1932, the arch organiser, Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar, returned to Bengal, and at once busied himself with

"rescue" work amongst those of his recruits who had fallen away since their return to India. For this purpose, and also in order to survey the possibilities of further development, he undertook a tour which led him to the United Provinces, Delhi, the Punjab and Bombay. He also dispatched a Punjabi member of the group to Madras to establish touch with Amir Haidar Khan who was under trial at the time. On his return to Calcutta, Mazumdar began to consolidate the pioneer work of those whom he had dispatched to India during the previous two years, and in April 1933 there emerged, as a result of his efforts, a new and separate organisation which called itself the Labour Party, Bengal, and which was intended to be the first of a chain of such bodies all over India.

This Party embodied many anti-imperialist elements in Bengal and had as its inner aim the formation of labourers into militant Communist groups. As, however, the direct preaching of Communism carried with it risks which were quite incommensurate with the results likely to be obtained, the Party hid its real object behind a facade of legitimate trades-unionism and set itself the task of winning the confidence of the labouring classes in and around Calcutta by giving sympathetic attention to their daily grievances. Mazumdar was no lover of spectacular heroics for their own sake, and it would be time enough to introduce Communist doctrines when a strong organisation had been built up by the above methods. Although his agents went to work amongst chemical workers, pottery workers, metal workers, railwaymen, jute workers and employees in match factories, as well as the student community, the Party's greatest success was in the Calcutta Port and Dockworkers' Union which was registered under the Trades-Union Act in March 1934, and which ultimately declared a strike of dockworkers eight months later.

### **Work in Northern India**

In July 1933, Niharendu paid another visit to Cawnpore to attend the inaugural conference of a United Provinces branch of the Party. This branch was placed in the charge of Dr. Mohammed Ashraf, whose Communist convictions owe their origin—as do

those of so many others—to the early activities of M. N. Roy's agents in India. His extremist views were later confirmed by a prolonged visit to London in 1927, in the course of which he seems to have come more directly under the influence of both the Communist Party of Great Britain and of M. N. Roy himself. The new branch of which he was given command seems to have a peculiarly barren record of achievement, though it is, of course, always difficult to assess the influence of a secret party until trouble actually breaks out. The inaugural conference was ill-attended, and subsequent efforts to extend activities to other parts of the province have met with some opposition and little apparent success. The old Workers' and Peasants' Party has been reconstituted, a few students' union have been formed, some organisational work has been done amongst *tonga* drivers, brass workers and butchers in Moradabad, amongst railway workers in Lucknow, and also amongst the peasantry in a few parts of the province and in the neighbouring Indian States. The Party's representatives have also displayed a recent willingness to co-operate with both the Congress Socialists and the All-India Trades-Union Congress whose annual session in Cawnpore they attended in company with Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar. Equally ineffectual was a branch of the Party formed by Karam Singh Man in the Punjab at about the same time. It survived for a short time, but eventually merged into the somewhat loosely constructed association of Communist organisations in that province which the next chapter will show is under the nominal direction of a "Communist Board of Control", of which Karam Singh became the convener. It should be mentioned, however, that the Punjab's branch's leanings were towards the Communist Party of India rather than the All-India Trades-Union Congress.

### **Overt Communism**

Very little was heard of Dutt Mazumdar's doings at the Cawnpore meeting in December 1933, and it appeared from the reports of surface activity which were received at the time that he had been badly snubbed when he asked for a say in the control of the All-India Trades-Union Congress. His underground efforts,

however, appear to have been less unsuccessful. He seems to have impressed not only Rajani Mukherji, but also Charles Mascarenhas, with the strength of his position. Mascarenhas later visited Calcutta and, as a result of discussions between the three of them, a co-operative alliance was formed. Doubt was entertained at the time whether Mazumdar would still be able to play his waiting game; to organise in an open and semi-constitutional way before showing his real intentions and to win the confidence of the workers by solid trades-unionist work rather than cloud their brains (and possibly frighten them as well) with abstract Communist theory. It seemed that several of those who had, by this new agreement, placed themselves under his wing would be disappointed if he did not provide the fireworks to which Bengali politicians had become accustomed. These doubts proved justified, and at the beginning of 1934 the Party began to shed its trades-unionist pretence and to come out more openly as the advocate of a revolution which should lead to a Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic on Russian lines. A typical example of this more blatant form of agitation was provided by the Tollygunge Workers' and Peasants' Conference which was held under the auspices of a local rice mill workers' union in January 1934. Mazumdar himself hoisted a red flag bearing the emblem of the hammer and sickle; shouts such as "Workers of the World Unite" were raised; Russian methods were extolled; and the workers present were urged to place their union on a "satisfactory basis". No political programme was given to them, however—advisedly so it seems.

### **The Cause of Mazumdar's Downfall**

The above example of the quickening of the tempo of Mazumdar's movement is also illustrative of another probable cause for his change of tactics. Not only had the general Communist *renaissance* which followed the release of the Meerut prisoners put the strident advocacy of Communist principles at a premium, but Mazumdar's motives had become the subject of criticism both in India and at his own headquarters in London. It was up to him, therefore, to prove his mettle and to set at rest any

doubts there might be that his Communism was of a mild or inferior quality. To these causes were later added a feeling of desperation as he saw that the period of his liberty was drawing to a close, and the Mazumdar who precipitated the ill-judged dockworkers' strike in November 1934 was certainly not the calculating barrister who returned to India in August 1932 to complete, in a reasoned and orderly manner, the work which he had begun in London. His impatience brought him into continual conflict with authority and considerably hampered the development of his schemes. In May 1934 he was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for sedition; he appealed to the High Court and while still on bail pending the hearing of his appeal, he was bound down for a year under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code; he was one of those arrested and prosecuted in connection with Mr. Gandhi's visit to Calcutta in July\*; he was sentenced to a further year's imprisonment for a speech which he delivered in November; he is involved at the time of writing in yet a third prosecution for sedition; and only now, nine months after he was first arrested, has the High Court confirmed the first sentence passed upon him.

### **Dangers of the Future**

The outcome of the dockworkers' strike which Muzumdar engineered was never in real doubt—the orthodox trades-unionists stepped in and the strike collapsed—and it may be said that the pathetic result of this first real trial of strength augurs ill for the future of Communism in Calcutta, a future in which Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar seems designed to play a very minor part. But it will be well to remember, without giving way to pessimism, that there are others of Muzumdar's capacity and ability who have been, and are being, trained to take up the work where he has left it, and that, even if only a small percentage of those who are recruited in London prove true to their training on their return to India, their number (and their mental and moral equipment) will still be adequate to the needs of the Communist situation,

\*Vide page 202.

especially if their petty officers are drawn from amongst those 2,500 *détenus* who have already received a modicum of instruction in Bolshevik theory and practice and a good deal of experience of secret organisation on terrorist lines. Those recruited in London and those in Indian detention camps come from the same social strata and there are many signs that a number of the latter have joined hands with the former and are prepared to make common cause. It has not been possible in a work of this kind to trace all the complicated connections between these two groups, but the cipher reports, Soumendra Nath Tagore's activities amongst students, the appearance of one-time terrorists as collaborators in the formation of the League Against Gandhism, each possibly of small account in itself, are nevertheless all pointers of the general direction. Again, it may be argued that the hold which Bengali *bhadralog* can obtain over the large foreign element which goes to the making of "Labour" in Bengal is negligible; but this is not the lesson which the history of Gopendra Nath Chakravarty, Dharani Goswami and Gopal Basak has to teach. Nor, for that matter, is an amalgamation of Mazumdar's Labour Party with the Communist Party of India beyond the realm of possibility. It is true that the Communist Party of Great Britain (and, therefore, presumably Moscow) is mildly displeased with some aspects of the Party's activities, and that Spratt and Mirajkar failed to remove the causes for this criticism when they were in Calcutta in September last. It is known, on the other hand, that Mazumdar has accepted the political thesis of the Communist Party of India\* and that the possibility of removing other differences of opinion is to be further explored when the opportunity arises. It is known, too, that the Comintern has been asked to give a clear decision on the Labour Party's exact position in Indian Communism, and if such a decision is given, it must naturally include an exposition of the relative merits of the programmes of each party, which may well prove to be the basis for a working agreement or even a complete submergence of mutual differences. What is true of Bengal is also

\* Vide pages 191-4 for a working summary of this thesis.

true, to some extent, of other parts of India. In the United Provinces, for example, the overtures which Dr. Ashraf is making to the Congress Socialists gives cause for reflection on the possible results of an alliance between these two groups; so, too, there is cause for misgiving in the class of Punjabi who has been attracted fortunately in small numbers at present, to Saklatvala's study classes in London and in the efforts which one of them (Karam Sing Man) is making in the direction of a united movement in the Punjab. Events in Singapore and Afghanistan\* referred to in earlier chapters, and similar events in Japan during the past three years have pointed the dangers attendant on Moscow's present recruiting policy, which is clearly calculated to produce a new class of leaders for the masses, a new hierarchy with inherited traditions of governance behind them, a paradoxical Communist aristocracy possessed of all the benefits which a western education bestows. The trials and troubles of the Indian labourer and the Indian peasant are manifold and, given the time and the energy, such persons will not find it difficult to devise ways of winning not only their confidence but their blind and unthinking devotion, even to the extent of bringing them to subscribe to a programme of the type of Subhas Bose's in which the peasants' task is to provide the "cannon fodder" for the troops while the *bhadralog* volunteers "wreck the civil administration".

\*Cf. the activities of the German clique in the latter country.

## **Appendix (v)**

### **The United National Front**

**Harry Politt, Rajani Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley \***

The people of India will be shortly called upon to take decisions of tremendous political importance decisions which will have a far reaching effect on the whole future of India's struggle for freedom. The fiftieth session of the Indian National Congress meets at Faizpur during December at a time when the Government is taking the final step to impose the new imperialist constitution upon India despite the overwhelming opposition of the people.

It is in these circumstances that the National Congress meets, with the heavy responsibility of preparing for the most critical period in the history of India's struggle. Every endeavour must be made to ensure that the conclusions of the Congress will give a powerful impetus to the movement for liberation. How can we assist in this direction? Our comrades of the Communist Party of India are facing great odds and working under enormous difficulties, but nevertheless playing a big part in helping to mould the great movement of workers, peasants and middle-class in such a manner that they will be able to deal a smashing blow to imperialism.

The question of establishing the United National Front in India is the most vital issue upon which the success of the future struggle will depend. The key need remains—the unity of all anti-imperialist forces in the common struggle.

At the Lucknow Session the question of Unity was concretely presented. The launching of this slogan of unity showed the tremendous feeling and support it was possible to rally behind

\*For the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.



this call. The discussion over the past nine months, and the efforts made by Congressmen, Congress Socialists and sections of the Labour movement on the question of the United Front has already produced a degree of success. We must endeavour to carry the question from the sphere of discussion to a complete crystallisation of a United National Front in India, but it is obvious from the discussions in the press and elsewhere that a number of questions have been raised which must be answered before the road is clear for the realisation of the united front.

The situation in India is particularly favourable for the organisation of a United Anti-Imperialist Front. There is not a conference called by the Congress Socialist Party, trade union, or peasant organisation without the demand being put forward for the formation of a common front against imperialism. Steadily the unification of radical groups is taking place; in the Punjab, unity between the Kirti Kisan Party, the Radical League and the Socialists; in Bengal, unity between the Labour Party and Socialists. This, coupled with a number of united front platforms on a number of particular questions, all show an intense desire to struggle for unity.

Jawaharlal Nehru's period of office as President of the Indian National Congress has been marked by his militant campaign throughout India, the central feature of which has been the call for the common front against imperialism. Nehru says:

"The essence of the joint Popular Front must be uncompromising opposition to Imperialism and the strength of it must inevitably come from the active participation of the peasantry and workers."

It is important that we should support his call for the United Front. What is the main task confronting the Anti-imperialist Front?

The Task is the Liberation of the Indian People and the introduction of a Democratic Regime.

To achieve success in this task we must be prepared to collaborate with all possible allies of the revolutionary vanguard in the struggle for national liberation and for the democratic rights of the people. It must be possible for any one who hates foreign oppression, who sympathises with the suffering of the people, to find a place for himself in this struggle.

We welcome the call of our Indian comrades in their official organ of the C.P.I. where they say:

“It is the duty of Indian Communists today to come out as the organisers of the broadest possible Anti-imperialist United front.”

The unification of the anti-imperialist forces will obviously start from the organisations already existing the Indian National Congress, the Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the two All India Trade Union Centres, Student and other radical organisations. The drawing together of these organisations and groups would give a tremendous impetus to the mass movement. The fact that the main task of the United Anti-Imperialist Front is the liberation of the country and the National regeneration of the great Indian people, would draw in with the Congress, the Indian middle classes alongside the great masses of workers and peasants. Thus creating a real mass United National Front against British Imperialism. ✓

Every endeavour must be made to make the Indian National Congress the pivot of the United National Front. We have not yet succeeded in winning collective affiliation of the anti-imperialist and mass organisations to the Congress. Nevertheless the National Congress is the principal existing mass organisation of elements seeking National liberation. It is in these circumstances that the National Congress can play a tremendous part in the realisation of the United Front.

We must be clear, however, in order to carry out the United Anti-Imperialist Front in practice that there must be no idea lurking in the minds of any of the participants that they have the right to exploit the United Front; or that one or other of the participants must win at the expense of the other. All participating in the United Front must accept the right of freedom of propaganda and the right of each to defend their own point of view. The Communists will be the first to enter into any agreement so long as it means strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle. The aim of the Communists in the United Anti-Imperialist Front will be success, not to one party, but to the millions of Indian people in their struggle for liberation.

What is the slogan which will generalise the struggle at the present stage? We are on the eve of the introduction of the New Constitution. For the past ten years the question of the Constitution has been continuously on the order of the day. From the period of the boycott of the Simon Commission in 1927, followed by the Civil Disobedience Movement, this struggle was conducted against the proposed slave Constitution. This Constitution is now being imposed. In the present stage therefore, the struggle against the Constitution imposed upon the people by British Imperialism, means a struggle for Democracy which does not exist in India and will not be given through the new Constitution. The main general slogan therefore for this National United Front should be for a Constituent Assembly.

Does this fight for the Constituent Assembly and for democracy mean, as has been suggested in some quarters, that the slogan for Soviets and for Socialism is reduced to mere words? On the contrary to suggest such an opposition is to fail to see the real development of the struggle. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru "there can be no Socialism without National Liberation."

The first task that faces us all is this liberation of India from foreign imperialist domination and the establishment of elementary democracy. This task is expressed in the slogan of the Constituent Assembly. But precisely this fight draws the mass into political awakening and activity; it can only be won by the widest mobilisation of the workers and the peasants; and this development of the struggle opens the way for the further activity of the masses, for the advance to the higher form of democracy, or Soviet Democracy, and to Socialism.

But while this is the immediate question we must continue our unswerving loyalty to Socialism during this period, developing the struggle for Socialism, organising the struggles of the working-class in their daily economic and class interests. It is obligatory upon Communists and Socialists consistently to carry this task on during the struggle for freedom; it is in this way that the soil must be prepared for the ultimate struggle for the socialist order.

There can be no question of substituting the slogan of Constituent Assembly for the slogan of Soviet Power. It was Roy who advanced

the slogan of Constituent Assembly against Soviets, against revolution. From his many declarations, including the one to the Calcutta session of the T.U.C. in 1931, it is clear that he put forward the Constituent Assembly as an anti-revolutionary slogan. On the other hand during that period our comrades were unable to combine their agitation for Constituent Assembly with the agitation for Soviets. We would emphasise that there is no contradiction between the slogan for Constituent Assembly and the agitation for Soviets.

This is clearly appreciated by our comrades who have dealt with this question in issue 9 of "The Communist"—the organ of the C.P.I. in an article "Anti-Imperialist United Front is not Royism." They show how Roy counterposes the slogan of Constituent Assembly to Soviets instead of counterposing it to the present slave Constitution, raising the illusion that the Constituent Assembly can fulfil the tasks of the Soviets.

"Comrades Dutt and Bradley formulate the Constituent Assembly as the United Front slogan which can immediately unite all Progressive Political Forces in the country, on a common platform in the fight against the Constitution. This fight, they make quite clear must not be a mere verbal denunciation of the constitution in legislatures but simultaneous mass action outside the legislatures also. *They never raise the illusion that Constituent Assembly can fulfil the tasks of Soviets.*"

It is correct to say that the demand for a democratic system and a Constituent Assembly will remain a mere phrase if it is not closely linked up with the daily economic struggle of the masses and the struggle for democratic rights of the people. With the acceptance by the United National Front of a concrete and precise programme of demands for the broad mass of workers, peasants and middle class, a programme, upon which the strength of the United Front will be built, it is inevitable that the main strength of the United Front must come from the active participation of workers, peasants and middle class.

It will be possible to draw together the tremendous forces of the people for the great struggle for complete liberation if we are able to relate the daily struggle for democratic rights of the people. In a country where the people are under the arbitrary and coercive

suppression of a Government an important basis is provided for the movement to struggle to win one democratic right after another. If we are able to relate the small, separate struggles against all forms of imperialist oppression with the demands for the withdrawal of Criminal Law Amendment Act, against suppression of Press, Assembly and organisation, against the disfranchisement of 87 per cent of the population, then the question of the whole struggle for democratic regime, the Constituent Assembly and the withdrawal of the slave Constitution, will become clear to the great majority of the population.

The mass character of the movement is the chief basis for without the masses there cannot be victory. It will be necessary to place in the forefront a precise programme of immediate and vital demands of workers, peasants and middle classes.

The most urgent and vital need for India today is the establishment of the United National Front. We feel that the overwhelming majority of the people of India could agree to the outline we have given above, Congressmen, Congress socialists, trade unionists, and middle classes. Agreement on the basis of the United National Front in India and the slogan of the Constituent Assembly against the slave Constitution could sweep the Faizpur session of the National Congress making it the most momentous in the history of India's struggle for liberation. We are confident that our comrades in India with all genuine anti-imperialist sections, will strive to achieve this object at Faizpur.

The Faizpur session of the National Congress will have the task of finalising its preparations for the elections under the new Constitution. In August the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. of the National Congress issued its Election Manifesto. It was hailed as an inspiring documents, while the Congress Socialists declared that the Election Manifesto was a "heartening call to action" and stated that it was a "bold and brilliant document." We feel that while the manifesto reiterates India's unconquerable desire for independence and reaffirms her determination to win it, while the manifesto calls for a clear rejection of the new Constitution, its opposition to war and the need for a vigorous campaign among the masses outside the Legislature nevertheless it still talks of

peaceful mass action and the encouragement of village industries. The manifesto would have done well clearly to formulate a precise programme of demands on behalf of the workers and peasants, and to have stated its position on the question of taking office under the new Constitution.

Our comrades can do much to strengthen the manifesto and obtain a clear announcement on these questions at Faizpur. On the question of the suggestion that freedom can be achieved by peaceful mass action we may have to reconsider our attitude. As Communists we can never agree to the preaching of Gandhism which seeks to restrict the struggle for freedom to non-violent passive resistance, and not, as Jawaharlal Nehru thinks, [see his autobiography, p.407] because the communists want to apply their philosophy blindfold and without due regard to facts and condition. On the contrary, adherence to Marxism-Leninism *obliges* us to take into account the concrete situation and *national peculiarities*. It is precisely the Bolsheviks, who for years carried on a struggle against the Russian Mensheviks and European Social Democrats, who wanted to make all revolutions to the same pattern. Lenin wrote:

“Our European philistines do not dream that the future revolution in the countries of the East, which are immeasurably more richly populated and which are immeasurably more outstanding for their varied social conditions, will undoubtedly be more original than the Russian Revolution.”

The opinion is usually current that it is either non-violent passive resistance or violence, no third way exists. It is thought that once the Communists are against limiting the peoples’ struggle with non-violent resistance they are for these very reasons always and every where for the application of violence. There can be nothing further from the truth.

What is of utmost importance to us is that the struggle of the masses should not stop at passive resistance, that these struggles should pass over from lower forms to higher, more active and effective forms—from boycott to mass demonstrations, from demonstrations to strikes, from strikes to mass action, by the people. Whether these struggles of the masses of the people for

liberation will lead to a violent clash of the people with their oppressors—and where and when—*depends not so much upon us nor upon the masses of the people of India as upon the Imperialist Oppressors.*

The main features in the election Manifesto of the National Congress is that the Congress recognises “for the fight for independence a Joint front is necessary,” and that the slogan for a Constituent Assembly is concretely placed against the slave Constitution.

The task confronting us at Faizpur must be to lay the foundation of a United National Front for India taking the general rallying slogan of Constituent Assembly. To fight for the acceptance of a stronger Election Manifesto avoiding any tendency to split, stressing the urgency of the united National Front in India, at the same time clarifying the main issues, including a precise charter of fundamental demands for workers, peasants and middle-classes, keeping in the centre the struggle for the Constituent Assembly, a fighting manifesto around which mass support could be rallied because the masses would see clearly that issues vital to them were in the forefront. On the basis of such manifesto a country-wide campaign could be waged, mobilising mass forces to smash the slave constitution, for the ending of passivity, driving forward for the final offensive against British Imperialism and for the complete Independence of India.

Harry Politt,  
R.P. Dutt,  
Ben Bradley,

For the Central Committee of  
The Communist Party of Great Britain

## Appendix (vi)

### **Indian Situation : Post-Meerut Conspiracy Case**

*(\*At the outset of this report the Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department, Government of British India, tried to justify the Meerut Conspiracy Case with the observation that : "the removal of the thirty leading Communist agitators from the political arena was immediately followed by a marked improvement in the industrial situation. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the arrests and searches which led up to the Meerut Conspiracy case placed the authorities in a commanding position and created a vacuum in the leadership of the movement which was filled by very inferior material". This observation was far from true. This report itself will bear testimony to the fact that this observation was actually a reflection of frustration of the Intelligence Bureau of the Home Department, Government of India, as Meerut Conspiracy case made the Indian Communists well-known, nationally and internationally, preparing ground for expansion of Communist movement in India and immensely helped the Indian Communists to mobilize international support and solidarity in their fight against British Imperialism.)*

#### **A Blow at Communism**

If further justification is required for the institution of what was to prove an extremely wearisome and protracted criminal case, it is to be found in the fact that the removal of the thirty leading Communist agitators from the political arena was immediately followed by a marked improvement in the industrial situation. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the arrests and searches which led up to the Meerut Conspiracy case placed the authorities in a commanding position and created a vacuum in the leadership of the movement which was filled by very inferior material. Those whom force of circumstances pressed to the top were possessed of an organizational capacity, an honesty of purpose, and a mental calibre very much below that with which most of the Meerut

Excerpts from : "INDIA AND COMMUNISM", Compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933, Revised up to 1st January, 1935 pages 158 - 210.



prisoners were endowed. There were many to claim that the mantle of Spratt had fallen upon them, but none whom it fitted or became. In the face of the rivalries and petty squabbling which this state of affairs brought about, and in spite of exhortations from Moscow itself to establish an "Indian Soviet Republic" and to organize for the "approaching gigantic revolutionary fights", the Communist Party of India (or, it would be more correct to say, the various Communist organizations in India which Spratt had temporarily welded together) have not as yet been able to recover even a tithe of the power and prestige which belonged to the followers of Moscow's doctrines prior to March 1929. It was some time, indeed, before those who were left behind did any thing at all towards rebuilding the system which had been the result of months of unremitting toil by capable and experienced workers, and which had been shattered by the seizure of all the important records prior to the Meerut case. Had merely the leaders been removed and the system remained intact, the Party might still have done much harm. As things turned out a prominent Calcutta Communist was forced to admit that "from June 1929 to October 1929 the time was very bad with us". In actual fact, the only practical event of any importance during the last nine months of 1929 was a short-lived strike in the Bombay textile mills which the *Girni Kamgar* Union brought about at the end of April.

### **A Peaceful Year**

The institution of the Meerut case was followed, therefore, by a spell of comparative freedom from both constructive reorganisation of Communist institutions and destructive meddling in labour affairs, and a period of industrial peace prevailed which seemed the greater by contrast with the serious unrest which had gone before. The passage of the Trades' Disputes Act through the Assembly served as something of a deterrent to those who sought to exploit industrial disputes, and the Public Safety Ordinance (while it lasted) gave pause to Moscow seriously to consider the expediency of sending foreign agents to India to take the places of Spratt and Bradley. Moreover, the inevitable revelations of police

methods of counter-attack, which were made in the course of evidence in open court at Meerut, showed Communists in India and abroad that their system of communication with each other needed some modification. These problems and others attendant on them needed serious thought and study by leading Communists, and to the various impediments to successful reorganization mentioned above there was added another—the lack of outside direction.

### **The Nagpur Congress and After**

Towards the close of 1929, however, the first signs of a possible recrudescence of Communist activity were noticed. The shadow of Meerut had by this time grown less opaque: the Public Safety Ordinance had been withdrawn in response to so-called “popular” clamour; and closer acquaintance with the Trades’ Disputes Act had shown that it was less fearsome in operation than from its form appeared. At the annual session of the All-India Trades Union Congress, held at Nagpur in December 1929, therefore, speeches were made and resolutions passed which made it very clear that Communism was still a living force in India. The Pan-Pacific Trades-Union Secretariat, the Workers’ Welfare League of India, and the League Against Imperialism—all three Communist organisations—made further bids for the allegiance of the Congress, and the two latter were in some measure successful. Though the Congress was sharply divided on the question of Communism, enough was said there to show that the harvest sown by Spratt and his colleagues at Jharia a year earlier was ripening, and that this professedly trades-unionist body was rapidly and surely passing under the control of Moscow. The formation of most of the saner elements into a rival organization, known as the Trades-Union Federation gave a still freer hand to the Communist element. Encouraged by all this, the Communist Party of India again began to rear its head, under the guidance mainly of S.V.Deshpande and Mrs. Suhasini Nambiar in Bombay and Abdul Halim in Calcutta. Early in February 1930, there began a widespread strike on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. There is no evidence that the

Communists were directly responsible for this strike, but they undoubtedly encouraged it and spared no pains to foster the spirit of unrest which it called forth. Shortly afterwards, a serious riot occurred in Calcutta, as a direct result of Communist incitement of the local bullock-cart drivers against new legislation which affected them. This was later acclaimed by the official Communist press as the first "barricade street fight with the police in India"—which indeed it was.

### **Civil Disobedience as Moscow's Opportunity**

Though Moscow's attitude towards Mr. Gandhi and the Congress has latterly been one of unremitting and continuous hostility, there is no doubt that Communists, both in India and abroad, watched the first civil disobedience movement with constant interest in order that they might usurp control of the resultant situation so soon as it had sufficiently matured to meet their ends. It is very much of a moot point whether they could ever have done so with the limited resources at their disposal, but the fact remains that their programme in 1930 was to conduct intensive propaganda amongst the peasants, the transport and metal workers and the troops; to form, arm and train bodies of young workers to resist the attacks of the police and to destroy capitalist buildings when the opportunity arose; and to win over to their side the existing youth organizations in the country. This programme was to be carried out in preparation for the day when the situation which the Congress was creating should pass beyond Mr. Gandhi's control, as it had done once before in 1922. It would then be the duty of the Indian Communists to see that the revolutionary heat engendered did not subside; it must be increased and used for other purposes. It is not without significance that in three outstanding cases in which the civil disobedience movement brought serious disorders in its train—in Sholapur, in Kishoreganj and in Buldana—no trace of Communist complicity was discernible. In each case, however, Moscow's official propagandists misled possibly by advices from Indian Communists, claimed the riots which occurred as a success on the part of the Communist Party of India.

## **S. V. Deshpande's Downfall**

As time went by, the Communists in India seemed to be growing more and more impotent. Many of the leaders (including S. V. Deshpande and Abdul Halim) served short terms of imprisonment on one charge or another and, on return, showed a marked inclination to keep within the law and to do no more than was necessary to retain their nominal leadership. Of Halim it was written by a member of his party that, "none knows why he does not work hard for his principles and in the masses; when he is asked to work he replies that he has no funds". By the end of 1930, Deshpande had drifted from a proposal to start an "All India Communist Party" to the formation of an Indian branch of the League Against Imperialism and a Marxian Students' Club, none of which ventures proved a success. His papers, the *Workers' Weekly* and the *Kranti*, both published along with numerous pamphlets in Bombay, contained more of vague fulminations than of tangible revolutionary schemes. As secretary of the All-India Trades-Union Congress, the Communist wing of the original organization of that name which had split at Nagpur in 1929, he incurred considerable unpopularity by his decision not to hold the annual session in Bombay in February 1931 as had been arranged. It was eventually held in Calcutta in the following July and the proceedings confirmed Deshpande's worst fears that he might be thrown out of power. The Congress broke up in disorder; Deshpande's party left the meeting; and each side thereafter claimed to be the All-India Trades-Union Congress and elected its own office-bearers\*. This disorderly session came as a suitable climax to all the disruptive tendencies which had been at work since March 1929 and which had split the Communist movement in India into numerous small units, each at slight variance with the other and many claiming direct descent from the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party and direct relations with the Communist International. (It will serve no useful purpose to give the names of even a few of the most important, for the

\* Deshpande's group has subsequently come to be known as the "Red" A.I.T.U.C.

groupings changed with such rapidity that names meant little of nothing). Which, if any, was entitled to the latter claim, it is difficult to say. The probability is that the Comintern, wise by past experience, welcomed all but bound itself to none; for there is no doubt that Moscow still hopes to be able to provide the cohesive influence which will again mould many of these warring groups into one dangerous and formidable entity.

### **M. N. Roy's Reappearance**

Chief amongst the rival parties was one sponsored by M. N. Roy, whose reappearance on the scene Moscow can hardly have welcomed. Chapter 13 spoke of the wane of Roy's influence at headquarters, and it will be convenient here to summarize his history in the years which immediately followed his fall from grace. After his removal from the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1928, as a result of frequent quarrels with Zinoviev, and his subsequent expulsion from membership of the International in 1929, Roy determined that he would build up a party of his own which would attempt to capture the Indian Communist movement and enable him to make his own terms with the Moscow leaders. His first move in this endeavour was to join the Brandler Thalheimer Communist Opposition Group in Germany, a party of no great influence either in numbers or wealth, but of sufficient importance to give him at least an official standing. Rallying round him in Berlin a few Indian enthusiasts in an abortive attempt to start a Berlin branch of the Indian National Congress, he sent two of them, Tayab Ali Shaikh and Sundar Kabadi, to India in the summer of 1930 as his advance agents. They took with them a manifesto addressed to the "Revolutionary Vanguard of the Toiling Masses of India", in which Roy made clear his disagreement with the policy of the "official" Communist Party, which, in his view, had been drifting further and further away from the ideals of Lenin. "While rejecting the discredited road of formal parliamentary democracy", a part of it ran. "the Communist Party cannot advocate that India will immediately be a Soviet Republic. That will be running after a Utopia. The Soviet State is the organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The

conditions in India are not at all ripe for such a State. The revolutionary State must be based upon all the oppressed and exploited classes.... The task of the pioneer group is to get in touch with all concerned with the interests of the toiling masses and with those sympathetic to Communism. The workers becoming class-conscious cannot be expected to join the Communist Party if it is organized only with a maximum programme which appears to have little relation to prevailing conditions. They must be shown that the solution of the problems actually before them, concerning the minimum demands of the toiling masses, come within the purview of the Communist Party. There is no other way to free an essentially revolutionary movement for national independence from leadership of the *bourgeoisie*... In India the way to Communism lies through the national revolution.... To this end it (the Communist Party) must work through the national mass organisations—the National Congress, Youth Leagues, Students' Organizations and volunteer corps". Roy was right, but it was no mere coincidence that the Meerut accused invariably referred to "our ex-comrade Roy" from then onwards.

### **The Reception of Roy's Doctrines**

The dissemination in India of propaganda on these lines by Roy's agents very quickly had its effect on a movement which had by no means recovered from effects of the Meerut case, and, in an incredibly short space of time. Roy's two lieutenants advanced by a series of bounds from one vantage point to another, from the Congress in Bombay through the Youth League to the *Gimi kamgar* Union, which they captured early in 1931 to the extreme discomfiture of S. V. Deshpande, the head of the "official" Communist Party, whose preserve it had been thitherto. Deshpande's position was still further embarrassed by the surreptitious arrival in December 1930 of M. N. Roy himself, travelling from Germany on a stolen passport. Working from behind the scenes, he succeeded in circulating an amazing amount of literature, including his new organ, the *Masses*, the counterpart of his earlier production, *The Masses of India*, which figured in

the Assembly Letter. A new programme issued by Roy differed but little from his earlier pronouncements with the important exception that it was couched in somewhat more moderate terms, its phraseology being such as to frighten neither constitutional trades-unionists nor those advocates of peasant reform who hold the methods of Moscow in abhorrence. In the field of trades-unionism Roy encountered not inconsiderable difficulties. There was no longer the same inflammable material to hand as had existed at an earlier period, and what there was of a trades-union movement in India was in moderate hands, while the workers as a whole had learnt by bitter experience to view the intentions of new-comers with considerable suspicion. Roy, however, was no shirker and there is no doubt that he set his hand most energetically to the performance of that part of his task which centered in the combination and penetration of the most virile trades-union organizations.

### **Introspective Criticism**

An appreciation of the situation by M. N. Roy which appeared in *Gegen den Strom*, the organ of the German Communist Opposition, on the 14th February 1931 is of interest—the more so because it is a shrewd appreciation of things as they really were. In the course of his article Roy said that, despite the claims of the Communist International, very little progress had been made with the organization of a Communist Party of India. The ultra-left tactics which had been employed during the past two years had destroyed many of the mass organizations which had been built up under Communist leadership. The *Girni Kamgar Union's* membership had fallen from 80,000 to 1,000; other trades-unions were in similar case. The “official” Communists were as generals without an army; by faulty leadership they had thoroughly disorganized and demoralized such following as had been theirs. He had, therefore, considered it his duty to issue a manifesto setting forth a platform. He did not propose the organization of a second Communist Party independent of the Communist International as he believed that the Communist Party of India must be a section of the Communist International; but such a

party could never be built up as a mass organization unless it abandoned the false line of action recommended by Zinoviev and adopted by the present Communist International. In reporting to the German Communist Opposition leaders Roy stated that the "official" Communist Party counted for nothing in India and did not exist outside Bombay and Calcutta. It was composed of students and was more in the nature of a study group. In only one union of railwaymen had it any influence. It advocated a generally correct agrarian programme but could accomplish nothing practical having no connection with the villages. What it had organizationally had been completely won over by his own party.

### **More Widespread Efforts**

Having secured a substantial footing in Bombay, Roy turned his attention elsewhere, and the month of March 1931 saw him touring the United Provinces prior to proceeding to Karachi to attend, at Jawahar Lal Nehru's invitation, the annual session of the Indian National Congress at the end of the month. (It is of no small importance that the "Declaration of Fundamental Rights"\* of which the Karachi Congress approved at Nehru's instance is in some respects, the minimum programme which Roy had advocated in Bombay a few weeks previously). His efforts in the United Provinces were attended with a considerable measure of success, and it is arguable that it was the effects of the spadework which Roy put in both before and after his visit to Karachi, that decided Nehru to launch his "no-tax" campaign at the end of November 1931. Although it is impossible to say, even after this lapse of time how far Roy succeeded in impregnating Congress workers in the affected area with his views, it is known that he was behind the Central Peasants' League which was working on lines parallel to those of the Congress and that the League's efforts were attended with a considerable measure of success in certain parts of the province. It is certainly a fact that the newly formed Congress Socialist Party is stronger in the United Provinces than

\* Appendix IV.



anywhere else, and I shall come later to the kinship of the Congress Socialist Party with Roy's organization. In the *Revolutionary Age* of New York, Roy wrote in April 1931: "All the political activities of the country are taking place on the background of a severe agrarian crisis which is driving the peasant masses to revolt. The Congress utilized this factor as the decisive weapon in its bargain with imperialism. Having made the compromise, it wanted to check the peasant revolt. Indeed, fear of the menacing forces of peasant revolt obliged the Congress to seek compromise with imperialism on the terms of complete capitulation. The peasant revolt, however, is not to be controlled. It still develops under the flag of the Congress, but defies all its frantic efforts to keep it under control. We are taking advantage of this transition stage for capturing the leadership of the movement. Active leaders in the villages still remain faithful Congressmen but are driven by circumstances to disregard the ideology and policy of the Congress. They were all confused when the Congress called off the "no-tax" campaign. In view of the condition of the peasantry, they know that the movement cannot be called off. Still, they are not yet ready to revolt against the Congress leadership. We have, therefore, provided them with a programme of immediate action which does not directly conflict with the Congress policy; but it is sure to intensify class struggle in the villages. The result will be that those working on the spot will be forced to break away from the Congress leadership unless they prefer to oppose the peasants openly, which they will not dare to do". This can only refer to the United Provinces.

It is interesting to observe in this connexion that Kandalkar, one of the leaders of the Bombay section of Roy's party, wrote to his friends in Germany in December 1932, that, "there is a growing disillusionment amongst the rank and file of the Congress. We are making all efforts to intensify this discontent and to lead it into fruitful channels". The results of these efforts are perhaps, less 'apparent in Bombay than in the United Provinces, but it must not be forgotten that the Congress Socialists are at present an army without a leader.

### **Roy's Failure in the Punjab**

In the Punjab, Roy met with no success and his overtures elicited a point-blank refusal of co-operation with his party. But the failure of Roy's efforts in this direction must be attributed more to his own arrest than to anything else. Had he had time to do so, he would undoubtedly have returned to the attack and have endeavoured to penetrate the *Kirti-Kisan* Organization, whose Communist proclivities are dealt with in a later chapter. As it was, he made efforts to capture by devious means another Punjabi revolutionary organization which was ready to hand—the *Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha*. Essentially an Upper India growth which has failed to take root in down-country places where attempts have been made to plant it, the *Sabha* is a Communist organization in all but name. Its emblems are the hammer and sickle, its preaching are but a slightly diluted form of Bolshevism and its connexion with the openly Communist *Kirti-Kisan Sabha* is no longer a matter for surmise.

### **Roy's Arrest and Conviction**

Roy did not himself go to Calcutta but he attempted through his agents, whose number had by that time been considerably augmented, to capture the All-India Trades-Union Congress which was in session there in July 1931. His party secured the valuable support of Subhas Chandra Bose, the President, and succeeded in carrying the day against S. V. Deshpande, whose disgruntled departure from the meeting has already been mentioned. Roy then decided to incorporate the story of his victory in a sort of valentine with which to woo the legitimate trades-unionists who, since the Nagpur Congress in 1929, had been building up the All-India Trades-Union Federation and the All-India Railwaymen's Federation. After the meeting, the general secretary elected by Roy's majority group issued a statement to the effect that, as the ultra-left group which had provoked the split at Nagpur in 1929 had now been driven out there was no longer any reason why the unions which had seceded at Nagpur should not return to the fold and thereby remove "the last obstacle in the way of unity". "The All-India Trades-Union Congress", the

statement proceeded "should not officially be bound by any shade of political opinion. Its members collectively and individually shall have the freedom to hold any political view or belong to any political party, so long as they accept the basic principles of trades-unionism". Shortly after this appeal was issued, Roy's whereabouts were at last discovered and he was arrested by the Bombay police prosecuted in Cawnpore in the original Communist conspiracy case (1924), and sentenced on the 9th January 1932 to twelve years' transportation. (The sentence was reduced on appeal to one of six years' rigorous imprisonment.) There is no gainsaying the fact that in the seven months during which he was at large in India, Roy did very considerable mischief, despite the fact that the police were continually hot on his heels. His doctrines gained many adherents in Bombay and the United Provinces, and at a later date also in Calcutta and its environs. He made serious and by no means unsuccessful endeavours to impregnate the Congress with his views and was received, and well received, by several of the Congress leaders in different parts of India. Even Mr. Gandhi was aware of his presence in the Congress *pandal* at Karachi. Judged from the intellectual standpoint, Roy, ever a realist, stands out head and shoulders above all other Indian Communist leaders with the possible exception of Dr. G. M. Adhikari, and his continuous exhortations to "eschew the disastrous ultra-left policy" were calculated in the end to win over many more adherents to Communism than Deshpande's vaporous thundering could ever have done. His conviction removed from the political arena a dangerous enemy of capitalism, landlordism and imperialism, and struck another blow at Indian Communism generally from which it is only now recovering.

### **The Effect of Roy's Removal**

Roy's entourage, important additions to which were Maniben Kara, a Municipal Councillor of Bombay, Kunwar Brajesh Singh Lal of Kalakankar, Jotyendra Kumar Banerji, Charles Mascarenhas and Rajani Mukharji, continued for a time their previous activities in selected areas on the lines laid down by the

master both before and after his arrest (for Roy's incarceration did not, unfortunately, put an end to his literary efforts); but the work of all his adherents gradually lost its former virility, and within a year of Roy's conviction, the party which his enthusiasm and energy had so speedily built up had lost much of its power and prestige. By the end of 1932, Tayab Ali Shaikh, Charles Mascarenhas, Maniben Kara, and a number of other important Bombay leaders had been convicted for specific offenses; R. S. Ruikar, the President of the majority group of the All-India Trades-Union Congress had been sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment in Nagpur; Sundar Kabadi and Brajesh Singh had left for Europe, the former apparently a deserter from the cause and the latter for reasons unknown but not, it would seem, entirely connected with the party's work; and J. K. Banerji secured a false passport and followed them early in 1933. The conduct of negotiations in favour of trades-union unity fell into other more moderate hands and eventually petered out in Madras in July 1932. It seems improbable at the time of writing that a stable platform on which all parties can unite will ever be built from the wreckage of past attempts.

### **The Comintern's Designs**

Although the difficulties against which the "official" Communists had to contend during these three years proved an insuperable obstacle on the road to successful reorganization, yet no history of the period in question would be complete which did not include a brief summary of Moscow's intentions with regard to India. In December 1930 there appeared, first in the *International Press Correspondence*, the official organ of the Communist International, and later in the London *Daily Worker* and the Moscow *Pravda*, a thesis on Indian Communism entitled "Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India". It was later translated into Urdu and a number of copies were found secreted on the person of a British Communist who was searched at Harwich on his return from Moscow. A reprint made in Bombay was widely circulated at the Karachi Congress in March 1931 and yet another reprint was made in Berlin later in the same

year. Of its wide circulation throughout India there is not the slightest doubt, for numerous and various copies have been discovered in many different parts of the country since its first appearance.

### **“Draft Platform of Action for India”**

After a vigorous denunciation of Gandhism and the Indian National Congress, this document advanced the following as the main tasks of the Indian Communist Party:—

- “1. The complete independence of India by the violent overthrow of British rule. The cancellation of all debts. The confiscation and nationalization of all British factories, banks, railways, sea and river transport, and plantations.
2. The establishment of a Soviet government. The realization of the right of national minorities to self-determination including separation. The abolition of the Native States. The creation of an Indian Federal Workers’ and Peasants’ Soviet Republic.
3. The confiscation, without compensation, of all lands, forests and other property of the landlords, ruling princes, churches, the British Government, officials and moneylenders, and the handing of them over for use by the toiling peasantry. The cancellation of slave agreements and all indebtedness of the peasantry to moneylenders and banks.
4. The eight-hour working-day and the radical improvement of conditions of labour. An increase in wages and State maintenance for the unemployed.”

There followed the assertion that the Communist Party of India considered the sole means of winning independence to be “a general national armed insurrection against the British exploiters”, and the “Platform” then proceeded to enunciate a series of tactical and strategical principles, *e.g.*, that individual acts of terrorism would not achieve the emancipation of India or “revolutionary armed insurrection of the widest possible masses”; that the most

dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Revolution was the “left” element in the Indian National Congress—Jawahar Lal Nehru, Subhas Bose, etc.; and that a ruthless war must be waged on the left national reformists. The recital of a number of extravagant “demands” then followed, including the “spreading of revolutionary propaganda among the soldiers and police”, and the thesis concluded with a statement to the effect that the Communist Party of India regarded itself as a section of the Communist International. The full text of this remarkable document is printed as an appendix.\*

### **Communist Propaganda Abroad**

This programme formed the basis of a steady and very expensive stream of Communist propaganda on the subject of India during the next two years. It is impossible, within the limited compass at my disposal, to deal in detail with this propaganda, on which was spent, after Roy was deposed, the bulk of the funds allotted to the Eastern Secretariat for Indian work. Such expressions as, “The workers and peasants will advance to the establishment of a Soviet India”, “Demand the withdrawal of the troops and fight for a free independent India”, “Young soldiers and sailors! Learn to use your rifles in order to turn them against the *bourgeoisie*!”, or “Indian soldiers! Prepare to hoist, when the time is ripe, the banner of armed insurrection, and fight shoulder to shoulder with the toiling masses, to overthrow British Imperialism”—were of all too frequent occurrence and clearly showed where Moscow's thoughts were hovering. Although Moscow's meddling was not nearly so apparent in all this welter of words as it had been before the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement in October 1929, yet the Comintern still contrived to accomplish its work through its paid handmaidens, who affected to be independent of the control of their Muscovite masters.

\* Appendix II.

## **The League Against Imperialism**

The most prolific of these in the output of propaganda on the subject of India was undoubtedly the League Against Imperialism, which came into being shortly before Sir David Petrie's book was produced, and of which it was there written that "it was suspected, though not at first established, that the League derived its inspiration and a great part of its funds from the Communist International; and the organizers of the League were at special pains to conceal this fact". Evidence which has accumulated since then (some of it was tendered at Meerut) makes it perfectly clear that the League is "an auxiliary organization of the Communist International over which the Comintern has complete control", and that its functions are to link up the Communist movement with national revolutionary movements in the colonies. Till August 1931. Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya remained in charge of the International secretariat of the League in Berlin working in conjunction with, and under the direction of, Willi Münzeberg, the well-known German Communist. In that month, however, his place was taken by Clemens Palme Dutt, the notorious British Communist of semi-Indian parentage who figured so prominently behind the scenes in the Meerut case. Later, in March 1933, came the Nazi *putsch* which made Berlin too hot for the League, and the office was transferred, first to Paris, and then to London where it was placed in charge of Reginald Bridgeman. These changes have made no perceptible difference to the League's activities, except that the English law of sedition has made the publishers of its literature somewhat more circumspect in their recent appeals to serving soldiers. The League still has India as its main objective, however, and thereby raises natural doubts of the advisability of affording sanctuary in the metropolises to an organization which has the disruption of the British Empire always in view.

## **Other Propagandist Bodies**

Other mouthpieces of the Communist mind which have turned their attention to India have been the Society for the Promotion of

Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia, the very efficient broadcasting stations in Moscow and Tashkent, the International Juridical Association, a number of *quasi*-scientific institutions in Russia itself, and the Friends of the Soviet Union with branches in many countries. For a time also there was the Pan-Pacific Trades-Union Congress in Shanghai. the bulk of this propaganda material has latterly been posted in London, where also the *International Press Correspondence* is now printed and published, and Moscow has thereby deftly turned the arrows of those critics who might seek to impute to her hostile activities against a country with which she is in friendly relations. The "technical reasons"\* to which the previous chapter referred have now become more apparent.

### **Anti-War Bodies**

Another source possible of infection is the large variety of anti-war bodies which, as apparently purely pacifist non-political organizations, attract intellectual cranks and unsuspecting social-democrats. Proof that some of these bodies are in close co-operation with, if not actually controlled by, Communist organizations is not lacking, and the part which they are destined to play in Moscow's schemes is clearer in the light of a speech made by Zinoviev at a session of the enlarged I.K.K.I. in March 1926. "A very important form of organization of Communist mass influence" he said, "are the sympathizing mass organizations for definite special purposes.... Peace societies against war, organizations against colonial atrocities and oppression of Eastern peoples, are new types of sympathizing mass organizations which will come under consideration in many countries in the immediate future". Subsequent attempts to penetrate this movement resulted in the withdrawal from it of many prominent persons whose pacifist activities had no ulterior motive, but the Comintern's work went on, and Willi Münzenberg was deputed to convene a conference of the "International Committee for the Fight Against

\* Vide page 149.



War", which was eventually held in Amsterdam in May 1932. The ostensible direction of this conference was in the hands of Henri Barbusse, the French intellectual, but the Soviet Union was represented and the great majority of those who attended it were Communists. "A detailed report of the proceedings appeared in the *International Press Correspondence* from which the following is an extract:" To sum up, it may be stated that this conference represented an excellent *working meeting*, concentrated in *mass action*.... This Paris Conference must be considered as a meeting greatly contributing to *the consolidation of the mass movement against imperialist war*. "Other conferences of its kind have since been held the result of which has been the emergence of a "World Committee Against War and Fascism" which is a proven auxiliary of the Comintern, subsidized and controlled from Moscow.

### **A More Subdued Note**

Despite the flamboyant note of optimism which pervaded this unceasing stream of literature on the subject of India, however, evidence was not lacking that the decline of the influence of the C.P.I. gave rise to considerable misgivings in Moscow. Thus Molotov, an important member of the Politbureau, explained the position in India to a Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held early in July 1930 in much less euphemistic terms than is usual on such occasions: "In India a Communist organization is in the course of formation; this will undergo many trials and tests in the impending revolutionary struggle before it can take its place as the Bolshevik vanguard of the Indian proletariat". A little less than a year later, Robin Page Arnot was sent by the Communist Party of Great Britain to attend the eleventh plenum of the Communist International in Moscow. He admitted in the course of his speech that the Communist Party of India existed, but existed in the process of formation. This same session devoted a considerable amount of its time to the discussion and eventual re-affirmation of the Comintern's Indian policy and India figured prominently also in the proceedings of

Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions held in Moscow in August 1930. Summing up the work accomplished by this latter convocation, the *Pravda* of the 1st September 1930 stated that highly important directions had been given to the Indian Revolutionary Trades-Union Movement.

### **The Communist Programme for 1933**

Another authoritative Communist statement in regard to India is to be found in the thesis presented to the twelfth plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International held in Moscow in August 1932. The part which India was to play in the revolutionary movement of 1933 was set forth as follows: "To strengthen the Communist Party politically and organizationally; to train Bolshevik cadres; to wage stubborn struggle in the reformist trade-unions; to develop a wide anti-imperialist front; to liberate the masses from the influence of the National Congress; to make agitational and organizational preparations for a general strike; to give the greatest possible support to the peasant movement for the non-payment of taxes, rents and debts; and to popularize the basic slogans and tasks of the agrarian revolution".

### **Communist Agents**

In order to ascertain how its directions and enunciated policy were being carried out in India and to advise its Indian comrades the Comintern despatched to India a series of agents of its own choosing. The first, who successfully evaded all efforts to locate him, appears to have arrived at the close of 1929 and to have returned to Europe after a six months' tour of inspection. Nothing is known of what he achieved, but subsequent events have proved that his visit was of no practical value to Moscow and it may be dismissed without further consideration. Similar is the case of Prem Lal Singh, an Indian student, who had just completed a course at the Lenin Institute in Moscow when he returned to India early in 1930 on a mission from the Communist International. After spending a few months in Meerut, where he established contact with some of the prisoners, he returned empty handed to Moscow on the pretext that he had been afraid of the police.

### **William Nathan Kweit and Harry Somers**

At about the same time there arrived in Bombay an American "antiquarian" named William Nathan Kweit. He was accompanied by his wife (*nee* Helen Bowlen) and was joined in July 1930 by another American, Harry Somers, who posed as the representative of a cellulose company. Kweit and Somers were found to be meeting each other surreptitiously and to be consorting also with certain members of Deshpande's party. They were well-supplied with funds and their arrival coincided with the publication of certain illicit news-sheets by the Deshpande group. Inquiries disclosed the fact that they had secured passports under false pretences and probably under fictitious names and were almost certainly underground Communist agents. The presence in India of two such representatives of the Comintern had already been suggested by secret information and both Kweit and Somers were deported under the Foreigners Act in September 1930.

### **Khushi Muhammad**

It was at this juncture that M. N. Roy returned to India, and it is an obvious assumption that when Muhammad Ali, *alias* Sepassi, was dispatched to India some months later, it was mainly because news of Roy's successes was causing anxiety in Moscow. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Sepassi had formerly worked in M. N. Roy's European organization and had been for several years engaged in secretarial work for the Comintern in Moscow. In April 1931 he arrived in the Hejaz in the hope that he would be able to mingle with Indian pilgrims and return with them to India unobserved. Fortunately, there was some hitch over the Egyptian visa for his false passport and he arrived in Mecca a few days after the departure of the pilgrims. Failing to achieve his object, he returned to Moscow in November 1931.

### **Henry G. Lynd**

More successful in his efforts was Henry G. Lynd, another American, who arrived in Bombay in February 1931 and

remained in India until he was deported in December of that year. Lynd, who was in affluent circumstances, posed as an importer of skins, but inquiries disclosed that his business in New York was exceedingly dubious and that he had given a false reference when applying for a passport. There was evidence also that he was a Communist. Lynd's mission to India was clearly to apportion the blame for the "official" party's breakdown, to remedy whatever defects he found, and to fight the influence of M. N. Roy's party. He attended several secret meetings of the so-called Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India in Bombay, which is known to have been placed in funds to the extent of Rs.12,000 shortly after Lynd's arrival. Lynd was, moreover, largely responsible for the issue of a new pamphlet entitled "Programme of the Communist Party of India" which naturally had as its basis the Draft Platform of Action already referred to. It would appear that Lynd correctly diagnosed the position namely, that though in theory Deshpande's party might have some political influence, organically it had no strength, and he, therefore, proposed a complete overhaul of the existing machinery. The party was to be entirely purged of Congress and other reformist influences and would not, at first, attempt to include the peasants within its ranks. These latter would gradually be drawn within the net through the influence of their fellow-villagers in the factories whose activities were to be specially directed against *bourgeois* and reformist influences by propaganda in the towns and cities. The Workers' and Peasants' Parties were to serve as a reservoir for steady and permanent recruitment of new members to the Communist Party, and there would be a systematic transfer of politically prepared workers into illegal organizations. The first and only practical step taken to bring this programme into force was the calling of a Young Workers' Conference in Bombay; this was later banned by the authorities. On arrival in Marseilles in the course of deportation to the United States of America, Lynd left the ship and made a bee-line for Moscow, there to report his conclusions to those at whose instance he had undoubtedly gone to India.

## **Amir Haidar Khan**

The next (in point of time, though probably first in order of importance) of Moscow's emissaries to be discovered was Amir Haidar Khan, a Punjabi and an absconding accused in the Meerut conspiracy case. Amir Haidar was by no means the least of those for whose arrest warrants were issued in March 1929, and his continuance at large might have had serious results had he not preferred to spend the greater part of his freedom abroad. He returned surreptitiously to India in the guise of a seaman at the end of March 1931 and settled down in Madras where he began to fulfil the mission on which the Third International is believed to have sent him to India. He gradually established himself as a Communist leader of importance and drew round him a growing circle of workers for the Communist cause, amongst them being D. Subba Rao whom he engaged as a full-time propagandist for work amongst textile workers. Slow though he was to establish himself in his new surroundings, he had, nevertheless, within a year of his arrival formed groups in three important mills, organized a local branch of the Young Workers' League, and dispatched at least one candidate for training in Moscow with a promise that more should follow. Having previously worked in Bombay for some time, he had little difficulty in establishing touch with Communists there, but his ambition seems to have been that Madras should ultimately supersede Bombay as the headquarters of the Communist movement in India. In fact, preparations for an all-India convention to be held in Madras were already in train when he was arrested on the 7th May 1932.

The papers seized at the time of his arrest showed how complete was his liaison with Bombay. There were amongst them letters from both Deshpande's and Randive's parties, which were then at daggers drawn. The letters in question showed that each party had laid its case before Amir Haidar in an attempt to win him to its side. Of the two he appears to have preferred the "secessionists" (as Randive's followers were called), and it is reported that he had arranged to smuggle their reports and literature to Moscow and to secure their recognition there. This should have been a matter of no great difficulty in view of the

report about Deshpande which Lynd submitted to the Communist International at the end of 1931. Randive's reports were almost certainly to be carried by students whose dispatch to Moscow, at the rate of one a month, Amir Haidar had arranged..... It is a little uncertain how many of these students actually left, but it was probably three or four; it is known that another was to have left shortly after the 22nd May 1932, while the Calcutta and Bombay centers had been asked to select candidates for future dispatch. The elaborate preparations made in this regard are of particular interest. One letter asked for a most detailed history of intending students. Question (e) of this document ran, "Whether he is suffering from T.B. or similar disease (without this information we cannot get financial help)", which suggested that Moscow was insisting on a higher standard of physical fitness than in the days when Muzaffar Ahmad and Soumendhra Nath Tagore were taken into the fold. From another letter it was to be inferred that the "financial help" consisted of the cost of the passage to Moscow and amounted, in each case, to some 500 rupees, which "can be demanded at the centre when the comrade reaches headquarters".

Amir Haidar Khan, with his recent training in methods of Communist attack, was clearly a most dangerous individual, and the fact that he was sentenced at the end of the year to terms of imprisonment totalling two and a half years gives cause for congratulation. He had served this term by the autumn of 1934, but so quickly and so energetically did he resume his old connexions and practices that within a month he had to be imprisoned again under the terms of the Madras State Prisoners Regulation, 1819.

### **John Magnus Clark and William Bennett**

Two other Communist agents who arrived in India during this period were John Magnus Clark and William Bennett who reached Bombay in September 1931. Beyond the fact that they were obviously not what they claimed to be and that both had left Canada supposedly for Moscow, nothing could be proved against them. Clark and Bennett brought with them considerable sums of money of the spending of which they were unable to give a

satisfactory account. An investigation of their case raised the strong presumption that a not inconsiderable part of it was spent in furtherance of the Communist movement. This and other circumstances, into which it is unnecessary to go here, led to their arrest in September 1932. They ultimately left the country at their own request in the following month.

### **The Standard of Moscow's Emissaries**

It cannot be claimed, of course, that all of Moscow's emissaries to India have been objects of official attention, but it may be accounted fortunate indeed that so many of them have come under the watchful eye of the police. Except for Amir Haidar Khan, none has any practical achievement to his credit. This is due to a variety of reasons, not least of which is the preventive action which the authorities in India have been able to take. But another important reason is the inferior stamp of the agents themselves, and it was a strange freak of fortune which placed substantial funds in the hands of those who were incapable of spending to the best advantage but kept an energetic enthusiast like Amir Haidar Khan in penury to the detriment of all his ambitious schemes. The Meerut convicts are known to have made complaints to Moscow on this score and to have specifically asked that British citizens be sent in the future, if, therefore, the Comintern repeats its former mistakes in this respect, it will have only itself to blame.

### **AFTER MEERUT**

#### **A Review of the Position at the Beginning of 1933**

Chapter 15 left the Meerut prisoners in jail; the last chapter was mainly concerned with the laboured yet futile efforts of those whom they left behind but it also mentioned the temporary effect of M. N. Roy's return to India. Before proceeding to examine the history of Indian Communism in 1933 and 1934, it would be wise to take stock of the situation, as it was, at the beginning of that period. Broadly speaking, Indian Communists were divided into two parties, the "official" Communist Party and the followers of M. N. Roy, the former blindly following Moscow's direction and

feverishly advocating an immediate general strike with or without pretext, while the latter, having grown sceptical of the competence of Stalin's advisers on Indian questions, preferred to consolidate their position before proceeding to extremes. It is to be hoped that previous chapters have made it sufficiently clear that the success of the Communist movement (as, indeed, of any movement) in India is almost entirely dependent on capable and energetic leadership—much more so than in most other countries of the world. This being so, the removal of thirty odd leaders in March 1929 naturally caused the virtual collapse of what was becoming an extremely dangerous movement, and the arrest of M.N.Roy, just as he was getting into his stride, had a like effect. The inadequacy of the supply of competent alternative leaders was the logical outcome of neglect of the Party during the palmy days of 1928 and this deficiency became the more pronounced by reason of the periodical imprisonment of such leaders as there were and the consequent dislocation of any arrangements which might have been made for training new cadres. This state of affairs also had reactions in Moscow, who was working more or less in the dark and was seriously handicapped both by the absence of reliable information and by her apparent inability to obtain the services of foreign agents of the calibre of Spratt and Bradley.

### **New Developments**

This, then, in brief, was the position at the end of 1932, since when certain new factors have made their appearance which seem likely, with proper handling, to provide Moscow with fresh opportunities to cause, at least embarrassment to Governments in India and, in the extreme, chaos in the country. These factors include the emergence of persons like Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose\* as would-be champions of the Communist creed and programme, the swing towards active Communism of many of the terrorists of Bengal, the decision of the Sikh *Ghadr* Party to compete for Moscow's favours, and the growing feeling in India that Gandhi, the only Indian with any pretensions to all-India leadership, has failed as a political leader in the march

\* Bose's most recent speeches and writings reveal him as an admirer of many of the elements of fascism, and it is a little difficult to say at present take him into. For the time being he is *persona non grata* in Moscow.



towards freedom. Which of the many indigenous weapons Moscow will decide to use, after taking what expert advice is now available is still a matter of surmise, but the history of the past fifteen years makes it almost certain that she will make another endeavour to blend as many of them as possible into a composite organization fashioned to her own design. Indian Communism during the past two years falls, therefore, into four main compartments—(1) the Communist Party of India, (2) M. N. Roy's party and the infant Congress Socialist Party, (3) converted terrorists, and (4) the Sikh *Ghadr* Party—and it will be convenient to devote a separate chapter to each of these aspects of the general movement.

### **Criticism from Meerut**

To take the Communist Party of India first. Early in 1933 a memorandum was received in Bombay, which seems indisputably to have been intended as the swan-song of the Communists then under trial at Meerut. This document also referred to two earlier reports from the same source; one of them was written in 1931 for the information of H.G.Lynd, the Comintern's representative in Bombay, and the other, compiled a year later, was to have been shown to J.M.Clark and William Bennett, whom it described as the representative of the R.I.L.U. There is a good deal of internal evidence to show that both these earlier reports were intended for perusal by the authorities in Moscow and it may be assumed that they reached their destination. They appear to have contained a lengthy analysis of the causes of the Party's downfall and instructions for reorganization on an all-India basis. Amongst the causes set forth were neglect of provincial contacts and misleading reports to the Comintern, but, first and foremost, the prolonged factional fight in Bombay, the centre of the movement, and the failure to submit the questions involved for arbitration either by the general membership of the Party, the Meerut accused, or even Moscow's own representatives in Bombay. The Bombay group was also accused of having lost contact with the Communist International, damage which had cost the movement dear and which it would take many months to repair. The writers were prepared to admit, however, that the determined offensive

launched by the Government, of which their own arrest was a part, had made some sort of retreat inevitable; that the very active "Roy opposition" had provided further difficulties; and finally, that the civil disobedience movement had presented the Party with very difficult tactical problems. Nevertheless, they deplored the mismanagement and lack of activity which had allowed things to reach a stage where practically all the unions over which the Party had previously held control had passed into the hands of their adversaries, the Roy group. They admitted the existence at the time of writing\* of only three definite groups in Bombay, Calcutta and Nagpur, which, though known to each other, maintained no sort of regular contact between themselves or with the nominal centre in Bombay.

### **Recommendations for Future Reorganization**

It is unnecessary to go any further into the details of these documents except to mention some of the more important proposals which they put forward for the rehabilitation of the Party. These are the more interesting because of efforts which have subsequently been made to give effect to them. A provisional central committee should be set up forthwith, composed of four elected representatives each from Bombay and Bengal, two from the Central Provinces, and possibly one or two from the Punjab. This Committee should assemble under cover of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the "Red" All-India Trades-Union Congress and adopt a suitable constitution. (The Draft Platform of Action would, of course, form the programme.) The agenda for this meeting should include, consideration of reports on the factional fight in Bombay, the election of a secretariat of three members, and the establishment of contacts in the Punjab, the United Provinces and Madras. The Committee should meet again after three months to consider the results of work on these lines and possibly to arrange for a Party convention to elect a permanent central committee. These documents also emphasized

\*The middle of 1932

the dangers of using the posts and telegraphs as channels of communication and advanced a suggestion that railwaymen should be employed as couriers for the conveyance of all secret correspondence. They further advocated the immediate publication of vernacular weekly papers in various centres, the free distribution of weekly or fortnightly news-sheets in large numbers, and the circulation of "international material" through the medium of an English monthly in order to enable provincial leaders to judge of their theoretical development and also to attract intellectuals to the movement. Another recommendation was that the liaison which the Bengal group had established with Communists in Malaya and China should be maintained as being a possible channel of communication with the Far Eastern Bureau.

### **Suggestions to the Comintern**

But the most interesting part of these reports was probably that which dealt with matters outside the Party's immediate control and the suggestions contained in this section make it quite clear that the reports were intended as much for Moscow's consumption as for the edification of those in India. Amongst them was a recommendation that a substantial number of youngmen, about thirty to begin with, should be sent forthwith to Moscow for training; if the scheme proved a success another batch could be sent each year. Methods of avoiding arrest on the way and of ensuring the secrecy of the scheme were also discussed in considerable detail. The Comintern was also warned not to trust as representatives of the Communist Party of India, *émigrés* who had been away from their country for long periods, but was advised rather to rely for its information on periodical visits to Moscow from members of the C.P.I. or, if that were impossible, on reports direct from India. An immediate need was said to be the issue by the Comintern of an "Open Letter" to the Communist Party of India, analyzing the mistakes of the past three years, apportioning the blame and giving a final decision on some of the major points in dispute between the various groups into which the Party had split up. Lastly, it was suggested that two

representatives of the Communist International should be sent, apparently as a permanent measure, to organize and supervise the work of the Party in India. One of them was to be stationed in Bombay in charge of the Central Committee; the other was to have his headquarters in Calcutta and was to tour in the provinces when necessary. The writers of these reports pertinently pointed out that these two men would have more scope for accomplishing their appointed tasks if they were British citizens, to whom, of course, the provisions of the Foreigners Act do not apply. It was desirable, they said, that these emissaries should not work wholly underground, as previous representatives had done, but more or less openly and as far as possible within the law. They could, for instance, associate openly with trades-unionist and political movements of all complexions on the pretext of studying them; they should, on the other hand, make no public speeches and should not allow their association with Communists to become too conspicuous. Past experience had shown that the usefulness of comrades who remained strictly underground was seriously reduced. They could meet very few people connected with the movement and, however, they disguised their intentions, they would be closely watched and their underground work rendered much more difficult.

### **Some Results of the Recommendations**

Even before these reports made their appearance in Bombay effect had been given to several of the recommendations which they contained. Amir Haidar Khan, for example, instituted a kind of courier service between Bombay and Madras with the help of employees of the Railway Mail Service, and it will be remembered, too, that, just prior to his arrest, he had been busily arranging the dispatch of Indian students for training in Moscow. The "Open Letter" to the Communist Party of India which appeared in the *International Press Correspondence* towards the end of 1932 has not, however, as yet been mentioned. This letter purported to emanate from the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany and dealt with precisely those subjects which the Meerut prisoners had suggested it should.

## **The Contents of the Open Letter**

In view of the doctrinal importance which Dr. Adhikari and others later attached to it, it will be as well to give a short account of its contents. It asserted that the development of the Indian Communist Movement was being blocked by a state of discord and the separate existence of Party groups, and stated that "it must be thoroughly realized (and this will determine how seriously and consistently the Communists stand by the illegal Party and the revolutionary struggle) that the leading organs of the Party and the kernel of its organizations must be in an illegal position and that mixing the conspirative and open apparatus of the Party organization is fatal for the Party and plays into the hands of the Government provocation. While developing the illegal organization in every way measures must be taken for preserving and strengthening the conspirative kernel of the Party organization. For this purpose all kinds of open activity (in the press, meetings, leagues, trade-unions, etc.), special groups and commissions, etc., should be formed which, working under the leadership of Party Committees, should under no circumstances injure the existence of illegal nuclei". "To sum up", it concluded, "the slogan of an all-India illegal centralized Communist Party, ideologically and organizationally united a true section of the Comintern, fighting for the platform of action of the Communist Party of India and the programme of the Communist International, must become the central slogan for gathering and forming the Party and for the struggle against wavering against a tendency of keeping to isolated circles, against toning down of the struggle against national reformism and opportunist sectarianism, all of which hinder the victory of the working class".

## **Further Failures**

The appearance in Bombay of these reports from Meerut was instantly followed by signs of drastic reorganization and by a regrouping of leaders and parties, seemingly with the object of excluding from further control of any of the Party's activities of those whom the report had condemned. This outburst of enthusiasm was not, however, very long-lived and by April 1933

the Party had fallen back into the old rut. The annual session of the "Red" A.I.T.U.C., which was to have been held at Jamshedpur during the Easter holidays and at which further important developments were expected, was first postponed till June and then abandoned altogether. During April and May a situation developed which was particularly favourable to the Party's purposes, but its leaders showed themselves quite incapable of grasping their opportunity. The textile mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad were feeling the full effect of the general trade depression and of Japanese competition; a number of them closed down; and a reduction of working hours and the introduction of more economical methods of work in those which kept open led to an all-round cut in wages. Naturally the vast army of mill workers and unemployed became discontented. But, although the Communists organized numerous meetings and processions and issued countless leaflets advocating a general strike, their indecision and general ineffectiveness prevented them from turning so favourable a set of circumstances to good account. The *Girni Kamgar* Union, the mainstay of the strikes in 1928 and 1929, was still in the hands of G.L.Kandalkar, a lieutenant of M.N.Roy, who also advocated a general strike, but in more cautious terms which insisted on the prior establishment of a substantial fund for the relief of the strikers. Although the "official" Communists made stronger endeavours than ever to regain their control of this union, first by negotiation and, when this failed, by open assault, their efforts proved no more successful than had several previous attempts during the past three years.

### **The Ahmedabad Union**

The struggle between these two parties was extended at about this time to Ahmedabad where a new Mill *Mazdoor* Union had just been formed by a few extremists. Each side sent a deputation to Ahmedabad to organize and capture the support of this new union. The result was at first a stalemate, but the "official" group gained the ascendancy later in the year when B.F.Bradley, freshly released from jail, paid a fleeting visit to Ahmedabad before

sailing for England. Bradley's display of interest in the union seems to have set it on its feet again and there can be no doubt that, but for the timely arrest of those in control of it in April 1934, it would have caused considerable trouble during the "general" strike which began in that month.

### **The Release of the Meerut Prisoners**

It was not till middle of August 1933, when the first of the Meerut prisoners were released, that anything in the nature of a serious attempt at reorganization was made. It is true, of course, that, long before August, Dr. Adhikari was released on bail pending the hearing of his appeal and that he spent a good deal of his time in Bombay studying the position of the Communist Party of India and doubtless planning its reorganization. But his hands were tied by the fact that, if his activities came too prominently to notice, his bail-bond might be cancelled at any moment. Shib Nath Banerji, who had been acquitted by the Sessions Court, had also returned to work, in a comparatively small way, amongst the East Indian Railway workers at Lillooah in co-operation with his former associates. Of those who were released on pronouncement of judgment at Allahabad, P.C. Joshi immediately set to work resuming his old contacts in Cawnpore, Allahabad and Lucknow, Lester Hutchinson thought it advisable to return to England, Gopal Basak retired into comparative obscurity and Shamsul Huda was welcomed back into the Calcutta fold. The rest were those who had refused to admit, that they were anything but trades-unionists and were mostly supporters of M.N.Roy's less militant doctrines.

### **Adhikari, the Specialist in Reorganization**

Freed from further anxiety, Dr. Adhikari set his hand most energetically to the task which was nearest his heart—the practical fulfilment of four years' concentrated and corporate scheming inside the Meerut jail. At first confining his attentions to Bombay, he interested himself in the Young Workers' League which celebrated the third anniversary of its inauguration with fresh enthusiasm. He was instrumental in the revival of

Deshpande's Marxian Students' Club, which was intended to serve as a recruiting ground for the Anti-Imperialist League and the All-India Communist Party, and mapped out for it a system of study circles for the teaching of Communist theory. He also revived the intention of holding the session of the "Red" Trades-Union Congress at Jamshedpur, under cover of which an attempt was to be made to establish the new provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of India.

### **The Provisional Central Committee**

In this he was unsuccessful, but he travelled instead to Calcutta early in November 1933 to attend an informal meeting of his own convening. He took with him S. G. Patkar, a member of S.V. Deshpande's group, and met there P. C. Joshi and two anonymous representatives\* of the Punjab and the Central provinces. Bengal was represented by three of its leading Communists about whose identity there is some uncertainty, but Abdul Halim was certainly one of them. After some discussion on the comparative advantages of an "organizational committee", with no political or controlling authority, merely to arrange a national convention which would set the movement going again, the meeting proceeded to transform itself into something more powerful which was called "the nucleus of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of India". It will be sufficient to say that the main reason for the selection of the latter form of organization was that it was felt that a Communist Party can only be built up by planned conscious effort from the top and the development of initiative from below. What was needed was not a federation of autonomous units but a centralized all-India party over which the Comintern could resume effective unitary control. The "nucleus", therefore, applied itself to the tasks, not only of composing factional differences and of reorganizing existing provincial groups and establishing them in provinces where none existed, but also of coordinating the activities of such groups and of making preliminary arrangements for holding an All-India Party Convention to elect a more regular Committee. Meanwhile, it was decided to draw up a draft political and organizational thesis and



to circulate it to members of existing groups. The "nucleus" was also to endeavour to widen its authority by co-opting three (two Punjabis and one from Bombay) of the Meerut prisoners who were due for release in the immediate future, two other competent Communists from other provinces, and also two members of Randive's group of "secessionists" when unity was achieved in Bombay. It was hoped that these tasks would be accomplished in three or four months' time, after which the next meeting was to be held. The meeting did not consider it would be justified in forming a Politbureau, a Control Commission, or other such Committees until the more representative meeting was held in February or March 1934. Dr. Adhikari was appointed as the temporary secretary and was authorized to nominate his successor should misfortune befall him. All the decisions made and the action taken on them would, of course, have to be ratified by the second and more representative meeting in due course.

### **Work in the Provinces**

Another decision related to the establishment of provincial committees containing as many worker-members as was conveniently possible. These committees were to perform their provincial tasks through elected bureaux each consisting of five members who would divide between them the portfolios of party organization, education, propaganda, mass work and secretarial work, the last of which would include theoretical and organizational supervision and co-ordination of the work of the other four departments. The "nucleus" recognized the fact that each province was faced with a different problem, and accordingly specified different immediate tasks for each, pending the completion, of which it would not be advisable to try to form provincial committees on the lines suggested. Thus, the *Kirti-Kisan* Party in the Punjab was to be changed into a series of peasant unions which would concentrate on a few promising areas rather than attempt to cover the whole province; the railway and textile workers in Lahore must be treated separately and be given

regular courses of Marxist-Leninist teaching; and the control of the whole movement should be placed in the hands of a sort of Anti-Imperialist League which would derive its authority from the collective affiliations of the various groups at work in the province. Work in the Central Provinces was to be confined to Nagpur and Akola, though contacts might be maintained in Pulgaon and other outstations if this could be arranged without interfering with the work at headquarters. Regular study circles were to be organized for the textile and tannery workers in Cawnpore and also amongst the students in Lucknow, Benares and Allahabad. More vigorous attempts were to be made to start a peasant section in Bengal. The Bombay difficulties also needed very special handling and a sub-committee was set up to deal with them. The programme seems to have been conceived on more modest lines than past experience would have led one to expect. For instance, the more backward provinces were not asked to recruit a large party membership, but to form a "kernel" of five or six whole-hearted workers; and even a well-developed province such as Bengal was merely told that a determined effort should be made to increase the strength of the Party to fifty within six months. The intention underlying all these proposals was revealed on several occasions by injunctions to those who would be in charge of the new provincial machinery to impress upon the members so recruited the urgent need for maintaining close contact with the working-classes. It seems, pertinent to add that all the decisions which the "nucleus" made were admittedly based on either the Draft Platform of Action for the Communist Party of India\* or the Open Letter from the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany.†

### **Activities in Furtherance of the New Programme**

The various members of the new provisional committee returned to their homes and lost no time in putting the programme

\* Appendix II

† Vide page 185

into effect. Within a month or two the rival groups in Bombay had been brought to a compromise, a new League Against Imperialism had been formed in the Punjab and the strengthening of M.L.Jaywant's Communist groups in Nagpur and Akola was progressing. In Bengal, too, the influence of Gopendra Nath Chakravarty and Dharani Goswami, both of whom had recently been released from jail, supported by Radha Raman Mitra, who was acquitted by the High Court, brought about an amalgamation between the orthodox Communist Party and a group of disillusioned terrorists who had come to believe that mass violence would be more effective than individual assassinations. The programme of this combined party did not differ very materially from that which the November meeting had outlined. Secret work was to be supplemented by open propaganda by a separate department, and a finance department was to collect subscriptions and donations in order that the Party might be made more or less self-supporting. A certain latitude was to be given to the terrorist section who were to be allowed to resort to dacoity and other forms of crime as a means of supplementing the Party's funds, provided that they did not thereby hamper the work in other directions.

### **A New Thesis on Indian Communism**

In due course the promised thesis appeared, a masterpiece of theoretical penmanship of which none but Dr. Adhikari was capable. Early in February 1934, a cyclostyled pamphlet made its appearance in Bombay and was sent in the weeks that followed for secret distribution in several industrial centres such as Lahore, Calcutta and Ahmedabad. Its title was "The Communist—Organ of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Section of the Communist International)": its contents were mainly the new thesis. The thesis was later reproduced, in an apocryphal form which kept it within the English law of sedition, in the *International Press Correspondence*, receiving thereby the formal blessing of the Comintern. It was said, by way of introduction, that the programme which it contained had been

accepted by the provisional committee. There is no record of a second meeting having been held prior to the publication of the thesis and it must, therefore, be assumed that, when K. N. Joglekar made a tour of the larger part of industrial India at the end of 1933, one of his objects was to obtain the individual assent of the members of the Committee. It is known that a part of his task was to press Dr. Adhikari's views on local Communist leaders. The thesis would be worth examination, if only because it provides a convenient resume of Moscow's present aims and methods in India; but it also represents four years of careful remodelling and assiduous polishing of the Communist programme by the most expert Communists whom India has yet produced, in daily consultation with each other and with those chosen Englishmen who had found with them, where the shoe pinched when it was actually being worn, and it is, therefore, entitled to even greater consideration on that account.

### **The Course of the Revolution**

After dilating at some length on the inequities of imperialism and discussing the role of the petty *bourgeoisie*, the peasantry, and the working class in the revolutionary struggle against it, the thesis proceeded to outline the course which the revolution should take. First must come "the transformation of individual strikes into a general political strike, the development of spontaneous peasant movements against rents or debts or taxes into an all-India movement, the fostering of a nation-wide agitation in favour of complete independence, and the spread of revolutionary propaganda amongst the police and in the army". The next step is to be the overthrow of British Imperialism, the Princes, and the Landlords; this "can only be achieved by an armed mass insurrection of the workers, peasants and soldiers under the leadership of the working class and its party, the Communist Party of India", and must only be attempted when workers and peasants are ready to work in unison. These "organs of struggle" will be so mobilized on the basis of strike and peasant committees, and later of solidiers' committees also, that they will be capable of immediate transformation into "organs of power" when the

revolution has succeeded. The struggle will be conducted by the proletariat masses under their own leadership and only the co-ordination of the struggle will be in the hands of the Communist Party of India. There will thus emerge a net-work of workers' soviets and peasants' soviets, the basic units of soviet power, and, when the hour of re-construction comes, these local soviets will be welded into one Indian Soviet State on the basis of "the fullest democracy of the toilers".

"But the process of revolution does not stop there", the treatise went on to say. "Under the rule of the workers' and peasants' Soviet Government, there will be a rapid development of industry, a progressive diminution of the importance of the capitalist elements, and the transition of agriculture from the individual to the collective basis of production". The first task, the filling of the fighting cadres, must at once be taken in hand. This could only be done "in the process of actual struggle by the formation of strike committees and revolutionary present committees" and it was on this part of the programme that Indian Communists must concentrate.

### **Relations with Other Groups**

It is unnecessary to go in great detail into the writer's criticism of the policies advocated by M. N. Roy, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Subhas Bose and Mr. Gandhi. Of Roy he said that, "a careful perusal of his book reveals that beneath a layer of Communist revolutionary phrases is hidden a denial of Communist revolutionary practice". He whole-heartedly condemned Nehru's idea of a Constituent Assembly, and urged the pressing need of informing the untouchable workers that "their emancipation cannot be achieved by their being taken inside the fold of Hinduism". In spite of his differences with this class of person, however, he advocated the participation by Communists in all their mass demonstrations, solely for the purpose of putting forward Communist views and slogans. "It is necessary", he said (quoting from the Open Letter to which reference has already been made) "to support all revolutionary student demonstrations; to be in the forefront in all clashes, with the police; to protest against all

political arrests, etc., constantly criticizing the Congress leadership, especially 'left' leadership and calling on the masses for higher forms of struggle". This part of the programme was to be in the hands of an Anti-Imperialist League which would, of course, work openly but under the control of the Communist Party in the same way as the strike committees and other Communist organizations.

### **Relations with the Terrorists**

Nor did this all-embracing treatise omit to deal with the problem of the terrorists. "It is the duty of the Communist Party of India", it ran, "to win over the rank and file of the terrorist groups, and especially of those groups who are showing an inclination towards Marxism and Communism, to the standpoint of consistent Marxism and of the Draft Platform of the Communist Party of India. While recognizing the heroism and the self-sacrifice of individual terrorists, it is essential to point out the futility and harmfulness of the method of individual terrorism, showing, at the same time, that Communists do not oppose violence but believe that it is only the mass violence of the revolutionary workers and peasants and of the town poor which will overthrow the rule of British Imperialism".

### **Work in the Trades-Unions**

Trades-unions, too, were to be brought under Communist influence by both open and secret work within their ranks. "It is the duty of every Communist to join every trades-union and to fight from within for the class programme and for revolutionary leadership and policies". The "Red" Trades-Union Congress was also to be revived, re-organized and strengthened. Lastly, leagues should be set up for the revolutionary political education of the young workers and for the purpose of drawing trained young workers into the ranks of the Party, and it was thought that it might be advisable to form militant workers' leagues and workers' parties in the provinces for similar purposes. These organizations were to be controlled by a core of well-trained and class-conscious Communist workers, and it was hoped that they

would be able to remove "another weakness of the Communist movement to-day—the inability to develop and extend illegal underground forms of movement, struggle and organization". "The Communist cadres", the thesis remarked on this subject, "have considerable experience of open mass work, but they still have to learn to devise methods to combine legal and illegal activity. Without this it is impossible to organize and bring the toiling masses to revolutionary battles. Without this it is impossible (under present conditions) to create a mass Communist Party"

### **The United Front in Operation**

Meanwhile, at the end of 1933, K. N. Joglekar, S. S. Mirajkar, S.V.Ghate and R.S.Nimbkar had regained their liberty. After a brief preliminary survey of the situation, in the course of which all but Nimbkar spurned the olive branch which M. N. Roy's disciples held out to them on condition that they renounced the Communist International and all its works, the three first-named decided to throw in their lot with their former colleagues and to place their services at Dr. Adhikari's disposal. Mirajkar was immediately given a position of responsibility in the new Central Committee. Joglekar has already been revealed in the guise of a sort of envoy plenipotentiary from Dr. Adhikari to the provinces. Ghate's activities did not bring him into prominence until he performed the current duties of the secretary of the Central Committee while Dr. Adhikari was in prison in the summer of 1934. Within two months of their release, this group decided that the time had come to measure their strength and they accordingly committed their now augmented following to a temporary alliance with M. N. Roy's adherents for the purpose of exploiting the general dissatisfaction which then existed in industrial circles in Bombay. The actual history of the strikes which resulted from these combined efforts is less interesting than the insight which they gave into the working of the Communist tactics of the United Front. But a knowledge of the former is an unfortunate prerequisite to a proper understanding of the latter and it is necessary, even at the risk of anticipating the history of the "Roy"

party's achievements, to set forth the salient facts of the strike wave which swept India during 1934.

### **The Strike Movement in 1934**

The question of a strike was first mooted at the annual session of M. N. Roy's section of the All-India Trades-Union Congress which was held at Cawnpore at Christmas. Feeling that labour conditions in Bombay warranted some more practical demonstration of sympathy than the customary resolutions, the Congress decided to hold an All-India Textile Workers' Conference in Bombay to consider the feasibility and desirability of organizing a general textile strike in the near future. A month later, at the end of January 1934, the Conference assembled and was attended by members of both the "Roy" and "official" parties from the Bombay Presidency, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces, as well as representatives from Baroda and Bengal. After some haggling and mutual recrimination the two groups jointly resolved to organize, within the next three months a country-wide strike of all textile workers. The Council of Action set up to take charge of this scheme contained representatives of both parties, and its members were instructed to tour their provinces forming strike committees, preaching the doctrine of a general textile strike and collecting funds in support of it. The campaign began at once and was conducted with vigour and enthusiasm in most of India's cotton manufacturing areas. A strike which occurred in a cotton mill in Sholapur early in February seems to have taken the Council by surprise, but the orthodox Communists lost no time in dispatching their agents to the locality and succeeded in extending its scope, and probably its duration as well. Although this premature outbreak cannot have been as welcome as if it had occurred two or three months later, it provided nevertheless, an admirable war cry for the campaign in other parts of the country. Two other premature and short-lived strikes were engineered, one in Cawnpore and the other in Ajmer, before the Council held its final decisive meeting in Ahmedabad on the 8th April. The 23rd April was selected as the date for the outbreak of the first preliminary strike in Bombay. This was to be



followed by the declaration of sympathetic strikes in textile mills in other parts of India on "May Day", which is usually celebrated by Communist demonstrations the world over. Efforts were redoubled as "May Day" approached. Meetings were held at more frequent intervals (there were, for instance, no less than eight separate meetings in Bombay City on the 15th April); processions were organised with greater regularity; and the spate of leaflets increased. On the appointed day the strike began in a modest way in Bombay, only four mills employing about 5,500 men, being involved. During the next few days, however, the response to threats and inveiglements exceeded the organizers most sanguine expectations and the situation rapidly deteriorated until, on the 27th April, there was virtually a general strike in progress. Only two mills of any importance were unaffected and the number of workers on strike on that day was approximately 70,000. The strike in Sholapur was still in progress and the workers in these two centres were joined by the 1st May by others in Nagpur and Delhi. For various reasons, including the prior arrest of the principals in some places, simultaneous action which had been arranged in a number of other areas failed to materialize. The Delhi operations, serious while they lasted, were conducted by Shib Nath Banerji assisted by another of the Meerut prisoners, but they came to a speedy end when it was found that the police would not permit the violent intimidatory methods by which alone the strike was enforced. Less drastic measures in the Central Provinces were at least partly responsible for the prolongation of the dispute in one group of mills till the end of June and for its extension to another group of mills in Nagpur. The local authorities at first had resort to the Criminal Procedure Code and arrested R.S. Ruikar and two of his fellow-workers as a preliminary to proceeding against them under section 107. They were forthwith released on bail, only to resume their activities with renewed vigour. When they were rearrested a few days later under the temporary provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 (and were, on this occasion, refused bail), the strike in this second group of mills immediately collapsed. Meanwhile, the strike in Bombay had increased both in scope and intensity

Neither magisterial orders, nor arrests for breaches of the ordinary law, nor the dispersal of processions and meetings, nor even occasional resort to firing in emergency, seemed able to stem the tide of violence and secret intimidation both in the streets and in the workers' homes. It quickly became evident that the ordinary law was inadequate to cope with the situation and it was, therefore, decided to call into section the Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act under the provisions of which fourteen leading Communist agitators including Joglekar and Mirajkar were summarily arrested and imprisoned on the 29th April. But Dr. Adhikari remained—now a veritable dictator behind the scenes—and others were found to take the places of those who had been removed. There was an instantaneous but short-lived improvement in the situation, after which the strike resumed its violent course, and it was not till the end of May. When Adhikari and thirteen more of his confederates had also been arrested and all meetings and processions in Bombay City had been prohibited, that its mad career was checked. The situation at once improved and, although a few sporadic cases of violence still occurred, the workers signified their appreciation of the steps taken to safeguard their lives and liberty by flocking to the mills to resume their work. The employment figures leapt from 27,500 to 41,500 within a week; in a fortnight the number at work was 69,500; and by the 23rd June, after two months of warfare, the attendance was 85,000, considerably more than it had been before the strike began.

### **The Political Aspect**

One of the most depressing aspects of the disorders briefly described above was the indication which they gave of the amount of harm which a handful of trained and experienced Communist agitators can do in a comparatively short space of time. The strike movement in 1934 provided more than one instance of a couple of such agitators, newly arrived in an industrial area, having worked up the most unpromising material to a pitch of excitement wherein they abandoned their work on the flimsiest of pretexts, only to return to it sadder and wiser men when the original instigators

were removed. Indeed, in every case referred to above, the removal of a comparatively small number of these professional strike mongers was followed by a return to saner methods and, in most cases, by a speedy demonstration of the fact that the workers' real desire was for employment regardless of its terms. There is abundant evidence of the fact that, when Dr. Adhikari and his followers first entered the joint Strike Committee in January 1934, they had strong hopes that the strike for which they agreed to work would be only one of a chain of disputes all over India embracing almost every branch of transport and industry. M. L. Jaywant, the enthusiastic party organizer in the Central Provinces, is known, for example, to have been strongly of opinion that it was essential to include railwaymen in the strike in order to prevent the transport of "blacklegs and the police (and also the army) to the affected areas to undo our work". He pressed these views upon his colleagues at the time, but for tactical reasons they were not voiced at the joint conference. Joglekar, too, made several speeches in the course of his all-India tour which suggested, in veiled terms perhaps, that only a general strike could bring salvation to the working-classes. But these open expressions of opinions generally held and of hopes widely entertained in orthodox Communist circles were the exception rather than the rule. Generally speaking, M. N. Roy's partisans found no real cause for complaint.

It was, in other less reputable ways, that the true-red Communists sought to work their will. Although there may have been ample justification for some of the fifty or more disputes which occurred in Bombay in April, the strike which P. C. Joshi brought about in the Muir Mills in Cawnpore in March was a glaring example of maladroit application of the Communist policy of transforming individual strikes into a general political strike. The workers in the Muir Mills, who were induced to strike in sympathy with their brother workers in Sholapur, are the best paid in Cawnpore and had no possible cause for complaint, and the only result of this senseless stoppage of work was the loss to the Party of the services of an enthusiastic worker (Joshi was sent

to jail for another two years) and the complete failure of Cawnpore to rise to the occasion when the "general" strike began seven weeks later. The strike in the railway workshops at Ajmer, which deprived the Party of another youthful enthusiast—R.D.Bharadwaj—is another case in point. But the more experienced leaders in Bombay committed no such indiscretions. Not till the strike was well under way did they reveal their true purpose. The Strike Committee's twenty demands to the employers, made after nearly four months' agitation and more than a fortnight's direct action, contained more political aspirations than pleas for the economic improvement of the workers' lot. When, moreover, the leaders of the *Girni Kamgar Union* (of M. N. Roy's persuasion) showed signs of wishing to make terms with the owners, the "official" Communists, prompted as usual by Dr. Adhikari, who had by that time usurped control of the Strike Committee, resolutely opposed a compromise on any terms whatever; the strike continued in full force, despite efforts to call it off until Dr. Adhikari was himself arrested about a fortnight later. Finally, having ousted their rivals from control the Communist Party of India openly set about the promotion of a general strike, as witness a typical leaflet signed by the Strike Committee's secretaries and issued on the 23rd May appealing to the railway, dock, municipal and tramway workers in Bombay to join the strike or another, which appeared the next day under the seal of the Party itself, exhorting the workers of all industries all over the country to enter the lists against capitalism and imperialism. The tactics of the United Front had outlived their usefulness; the Communists must now come out into the open as the sole champions of the working-classes. Reviewing their activities in retrospect some four months later, the Bombay "official" Communists claimed that the strike had rehabilitated the Party with the textile workers, had increased the membership of the Party and had had very beneficial results in Sholapur. The Young Workers' League had also benefited very considerably and had had to open two new branch offices to cope with its increased membership.

## **The Educational Aspect**

It has already been shown that the Communist Party of India had been urged from all sides to press on with the work of "filling the fighting cadres"—an objective which could only be achieved "in the process of actual struggle by the formation of strike committees and revolutionary peasant committees". As Dange succinctly put it in his defence statement at Meerut, "the strike period is the only period when the cultural level of the workers can be raised on a mass scale.... One lecture on any subject in the strike is more valuable than a month in a night school". The orthodox Communist members of the Council of Action must have realized that anything in the nature of a general strike was quite out of the question but they were insistent, nevertheless, that the strike must not be postponed. An army cannot become efficient without periodical manoeuvres and the coming strike would give valuable practical experience to both leaders and workers, even though it might fail to produce more immediate concrete results. When trouble broke out in Bombay, therefore, the strikers, urged on by these extremist leaders, became bolder as their number swelled and as the promised fruits of success seemed to come closer to their grasp. From jeering at, and abuse of, the police on the first two days they progressed to somewhat timid stoning, and finally indulged, on the fourth day, in murderous attacks on the police and loyal workers, which were only repulsed by resort to firing after a number of policemen had been seriously injured. Much was made in Communist circles of the fact that the fighting on the 27th April was carried out under the leadership of the workers themselves, and it was felt that this was a great step forward in the training of the proletariat. When the Strike Committee was reconstituted after the arrests on the 29th April, actual strikers were admitted to it and so the training went on under expert supervision. Lectures and home talks and the study of specially prepared pamphlets were supplemented by practical exercises in actual conflict with the police, until the arrest of the instructors at the end of May put an end to the course of training. Some weeks later, when the strike was just over the secretary of the Young Workers' League issued a Mahrathi leaflet in which he

took to the League's credit the lion's share of the preliminary propaganda and the actual fighting with the police and proceeded to examine the causes of the success of the operations. "The reason is" the leaflet ran, "that the members of the Y.W.L. are being given instruction in the revolutionary Communist philosophy of Marx and Lenin.... The members of the Y.W.L. are not only given theoretical instruction but practical training also and it is for this reason that they were able to give such a good account of themselves in the general strike this year." Nor was the "practical training" confined to assaults on the police; for on at least one occasion, the strikers were incited to storm mill premises, and one leaflet which was issued in the course of the strike by the Communist Party of India exhorted the workers of all industries to collect arms and ammunition and to use them in the fight against the police and the military. The leaders in Sholapur, acting apparently on advice from Bombay, went one step further. An explosion which occurred in Poona at the end of April was found to have been caused by the carelessness of a science student while he was preparing bombs to the order of one of the Communist leaders of the strike in Sholapur. (The leader in question had, incidentally, visited Bombay two days before he placed the order.) This incident caused the police to make a critical analysis of several recent explosions in Sholapur, and it was discovered that no less than seven of these had been patently intended to terrorize loyal workers. Bombay and Sholapur were not, of course, the only places where violence on the part of the strikers was directly attributable to Communist causes. The strikes in Delhi and Nagpur provided other outstanding examples.

### **Activities in Bengal**

The Calcutta Communists held aloof from the strike but they were by no means inactive. The continued existence, in spite of the compromise at the end of 1933, of three main groups hampered their work to some extent, but they managed to take charge of several small strikes which occurred in the spring of 1934 and to extend their influence to three or four hitherto

untouched areas on the banks of the Hooghly. They also made efforts to start an Anti-Imperialist League, which would, it was hoped, provide a point of contact for the various discordant groups whose means differ but who have amongst their common aims the disruption of the Empire and the formation of some kind of Indian Soviet State. Such a body would, of course, serve a useful Communist purpose—much the same as the Workers' and Peasants' Parties were designed to serve in the days before the Meerut case was instituted. As it happened, however, their efforts in this direction brought nothing but tribulation to the Party. Mr. Garndhi was then in the midst of his all-India tour on behalf of the depressed classes and was planning to spend some week in the districts of Bengal. There was much open opposition to this proposal from educated Bengalis and the time seemed opportune to launch the anti-Imperialist scheme. It was natural in the circumstances that the new organisation should be called the "League Against Gandhism", but this name aroused the antagonism of a few influential orthodox Congressmen. Several rowdy meetings were held, tempers rose, and at the end of a month, nine or ten of the Party's most prominent leaders, including Abdul Halim and Shamsul Huda, found themselves involved in criminal proceedings which engaged a considerable part of their attention for some weeks to come. Their press service was also disorganised by official demands for security, but despite these handicaps they managed to produce a considerable amount of cyclostyled literature, while one of their number was continually occupied at Jamshedpur in Bihar assisting in the organisation of Tata and Co.'s employees. When his activities became too blatantly aggressive, the Bihar Government externed him from the province, but he was quickly replaced by another "comrade" from Calcutta who was similarly expelled in due course. Of the activities of the other Communist groups in Bengal the tale will be told at a later stage, and I also reserve the history of Communist activities in the Punjab for special treatment in a subsequent chapter.

**The Proscription of the Communist Party of India**

It was at this juncture that the Government of India decided that the Communist Party of India must be notified as an unlawful organisation under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 (as amended in 1932). The various activities described above had made it quite clear that the Meerut prisoners had no intention whatsoever of abandoning the practices for which they were prosecuted and in which they publicly gloried when they made their so-called defence statements before the Court of Session. It was obvious that they proposed rather to profit by past mistakes and to perfect, with Moscow's specialist aid, an organisation whose construction had been interrupted by official action in 1929. With a view, therefore, to impede the progress of this dangerous movement, the Government made a careful survey of their legal armoury. The sedition section and that which penalized the promotion of class hatred had been put to good use in some parts of India, but the restricted interpretation which had been placed upon their meaning by certain High Courts had seriously limited their effect in other provinces. Certain of the temporary special emergency powers which the Legislatures conferred upon the authorities in 1932 had also been of use, but something more seemed still to be needed and as there was ample justification in law notifying the Communist Party of India as an unlawful organisation, it was decided that this course should be taken. It was recognized at the time that it would be difficult to obtain convictions under the Act, but it was hoped that the moral effect of the knowledge that the Government was declaring war on Communism root and branch would not be inconsiderable and that, by driving the Party still further underground and by laying its offices, funds, records and literature open to seizure (at any rate, till the end of 1935), this action would render more difficult the Party's main task of organising the country for an armed mass rebellion. This notification was quickly followed by another issued by the Punjab Government in respect of five Communist associations with their headquarters in that province. The Madras Government also declared unlawful the Young Workers' League in Madras which again began to rear its head when Amir Haidar



Khan was released. Some months later, too, the Bombay Government followed suit with a notification which declared unlawful five of the more important orthodox Communist organisations in that Presidency, amongst them being the "Red" *Girni Kamgar Union*, the Young Workers' League and the Marxist Students' Club.

### **Secretive Methods**

This action on the part of the authorities emphasized the need for the organisation of an underground branch of the Party and although Dr. Adhikari was exiled, on his release from jail, to a small town in the south of the Bombay Presidency, it was not long before he found ways of communicating his advice on this all-important subject to those whom he had left in charge. A sample of his work is the suggestion that the Politbureaux of both the Central Committee and each provincial committee (consisting in each case of three really capable and experienced "comrades") should work entirely underground, unburdened by any form of open work. The bureaux' main responsibilities would be the issue and secret circulation of reports, resolutions, decisions, etc., made by their respective committees, the production of party newspapers and the development of what Adhikari described as "the technical apparatus". This last task consists of the provision of a number of secret courier services between the centre and the provinces, between the provinces themselves, and also between provincial committees and their subordinate organisations. Unknown and unmarked members of the Party should be chosen for this work which must be carried on with the utmost secrecy, for it was only through a network of such "technical arrangement" that the central authority and the provincial committees can keep alive their contact with the cells at work in the various branches of transport industry and agriculture. It is too early yet to say what measure of success will attend these efforts, but a beginning is known to have been made and it seems pertinent to recall (as Dr. Adhikari also did) the case of Amir Haidar Khan who had completed nine months' underground work and had established

the framework of a courier service to Bombay before he attracted the attention of the Madras police.

### **Philip Spratt's Reappearance**

It is unnecessary to discuss the measures by which the various provincial committees sought to negate the effects of the Government's attack. The case of Calcutta is typical; there Abdul Halim issued instructions that unmarked members of the Party were to be chosen from the intelligentsia and were to continue themselves entirely to secret activity amongst the working classes and to the holding of private study circles. The real leaders must take no part in open activities. It was, while schemes of this nature were under consideration, that Philip Spratt's term of imprisonment came to an end on the 6th September, and, as he had considerable practical experience of this type of work both in Bombay and Calcutta, his counsel was much in demand. After a short stay in Allahabad, he spent a month in Calcutta not only advising the local branch of the Communist Party of India on organisational questions but in endeavouring also to compose differences which still existed in spite of several earlier efforts to dissipate them. He was very little more successful in this latter direction than his predecessors had been and he eventually departed for Jhansi and on to Bombay leaving S. S. Mirajkar (who had joined him meanwhile) to try his hand. In Bombay he attended a number of secret and open meetings before leaving on the 14th November for Wardha, where he is known to have had interviews with Mr. Gandhi on three successive days. Thereafter, he proceeded to Madras to hold brief intercourse with members of the Young Workers' League and other socio-Communist groups in the Presidency. Throughout his tour he spent a great deal of time in a patient study of the situation in the course of which he showed considerably more deference to the views of the "reformists" than is usual amongst orthodox Communists in India. His tour seems to have had a threefold object—the preparation of an impartial report for the World Congress of the Communist International which was to be held in Moscow early in 1935, the removal of obstacles in the way of an all-India

anti-imperialist united front and the reorganisation of that side of the Communist movement which he represents. Despite Dr. Adhikari's earnest appeal to his colleagues not to endanger Spratt by engaging him in active work, his activities resulted in his detention under the Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act on the 18th December. And there we must leave him.

### **Financial Assistance from Abroad**

Spratt was not the only prominent Communist who was moving about India at this time. S. S. Mirajkar and K. N. Joglekar were particularly active in this respect. The inner purpose of their visits to various industrial centres is a matter mainly of conjecture, but it was somewhat disquieting to find them able to undertake expensive tours on behalf of a party which had no visible income. Nor was official misgiving in this regard in any way relieved by a number of vaguely indefinite, but very persistent reports to the effect that they and others of their kind were carrying funds from Bombay to other centres. These reports also spoke of the regular receipt in Bombay and Calcutta of considerable sums from abroad, of mysterious agents who brought them by sea, of elaborate arrangements to forewarn the Indian party of their advent, and of careful secret planning so to dispose of them on arrival that the authorities should be unaware of their existence. Although there has been no direct corroboration of these accounts of what was going on, there is, on the other hand, no reason to doubt that they have a substantial element of truth in them. To say the least, they raise a strong presumption that the arrangements which were in force prior to 1929 have now been resumed at the instance of B.F. Bradley, who is said to have visited Moscow during the summer of 1934 expressly to tender advice on this and kindred subjects. If this be so, the Communist Party of Great Britain is almost certainly acting once more as the Communist's intermediary in this as in other matters.

### **An Indian Section of the League Against Imperialism**

That this is likely to be the case is demonstrated in a variety of other ways, some of which (*e.g.*, the dispatch of Communist

literature of international importance from London instead of from Continental cities) have already been mentioned. Another indication is the recent formation in London of an Indian section of the League against Imperialism, "for the purpose of establishing some form of organisational link between Indian who are opposed to foreign rule in India". This new section (and others in the process of formation in two or three important English and Scottish cities) are to be under the control of the British section, of which Bradley assumed charge immediately on his return from Russia. The new section's literary efforts have shown beyond doubt that its views are in complete harmony with those of its parent body and also with those of the International Secretariat, whose headquarters are also in London. Its appearance—or perhaps it would be more correct to say, Bradley's assumption of his new role of Secretary for Indian Affairs—resulted in a marked increase of Communist activity in Indian circles in London and a consequent broadening of the field of recruitment to the ranks of the Communist Party of India.

### **Other Forms of Assistance**

It is not, however, the Comintern's practice to place all its eggs in one basket. Despairing, no doubt, of those who were in control of Indian Communist affairs during the period of degeneration, the Comintern entered, as I have already suggested and as I shall show more amply in a subsequent chapter, into an alliance with another readymade Indian organisation—the *Sikh Ghadr* Party. I only mention this fact here because for some time past the *Ghadr* Party has been the Comintern's main—but not its only—point of contact with India, and at least one member of this Party, a trained product of the Eastern University, has been sent back to India to accomplish the task of establishing liaison between the groups in Bengal and the Punjab. Amongst other recommendations which passed from Moscow to India by this channel. I may mention the opening of Communist schools in convenient Indian centres and the inauguration of a seamen's courier service in co-operation with the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers. Nor has Muhammad Ali, *alias* Sepassi,

been idle. From his new headquarters in Moscow, he has continued to interchange correspondence with Indian Communists, often through Iqbal Schedai who seems to have taken his place in Paris. His letters have been full of the usual advice and instructions, the result of consultation with "some of my friends interested in your work", as to the correct political line for the Party's programme. "Your organisation pays little attention to illegal work and illegal forms of organisation", he wrote on one occasion. "You even go so far as to give the names of all your prominent workers in an open letter. A revolutionary organisation cannot afford to do that." But I must return to the path from which I have strayed in pursuit of a side-issue.

### **A Second Meeting of the Provisional Central Committee**

At the end of 1934, using the crowded annual session of the Indian National Congress as a cover for their movements, the members of the provisional central committee assembled in Bombay. The casualties which had resulted from the previous year's campaign had been made good by nomination or co-option. S. S. Mirajkar had, for instance, taken Dr. Adhikari's place as secretary and Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, a prominent Communist in Cawnpore, had succeeded P. C. Joshi, while the Committee's representativeness had been enlarged by the inclusion of a Madrassi member. The main business before this meeting was the consideration of reports from all provincial branches of the Party with the exception of that in the Punjab. These reports are of some interest as revealing the Party's own measure of its achievements during 1934. Briefly, they are said to have disclosed an increase of the Party's membership from a score or so at the beginning of the year to about 150. There were also said to be a hundred or more candidates awaiting election. The Party's field of activities had been extended to cover the three main railway systems, the entire textile industry in the Bombay Presidency and a part of the jute industry in Bengal and the cotton industry in Cawnpore. A dozen or more study circles had been started for

workers and educated youths. Very little work was being done in "reformist" unions, but the United Provinces and Bombay parties had established contact with the Congress Socialist Party. Except possibly in the Punjab, from which province no report was forthcoming, only a small beginning had been made with the work amongst the peasantry. All the basic documents had been translated into Marathi, but little progress had been made with translation into other Indian languages. Another important subject which was discussed was the question of negotiations between the "Red" All-India-Trades Union Congress and M. N. Roy's more virile branch of the same organisation. There were those who advocated the dissolution of the "Red" Congress and the issue of orders to all its affiliated unions to seek affiliation with M. N. Roy's body in order to work from within it. This suggestion did not, however, find general acceptance and a decision was reached that the "Red" Trades-Union Congress should only agree to negotiate if overtures came from the other side; there should be no suggestion that the orthodox Communists were at all interested in such an agreement.

### **Plans for the Immediate Future**

The Committee also looked into the future, and sketched out a plan of action for provincial organisations to follow. They were directed to reorganise themselves and to start work on the basis of the new constitution of the Communist Party of India which had appeared in draft form in the *International Press Correspondence* of the 11th May 1934 and which the meeting had finally accepted with a few minor amendments. The draft statutes are printed as an appendix\*. The committee are also said to have laid down the following as the main tasks for the immediate future: (1) the recruitment of Party members on a wide scale; (2) the formation of factory cells in industrial centres and peasant committees in rural areas; (3) "fraction" work in

\* Appendix III.

reformist unions and the formation of new unions in industrial centres where they do not exist; (4) co-ordination of work on the railways; (5) the preparation of a series of provincial theses for a plan of work amongst the peasantry; (6) the formation of anti-imperialist leagues; (7) the translation of Party publications into provincial languages; (8) the formation of more study circles covering a wider area; and (9) the publication of an English organ at the centre and of Party newspapers in appropriate vernaculars. On the eve of the New Year, K. N. Joglekar visited Lucknow and, under the kindly shelter of an inaugural conference of the All-India Press Workers' Union, explained to Communists at work in Northern India the implications of the Committee's decisions and the methods by which they could best be carried out. And so ended twelve months of unremitting toil in the face of adversity, of continual warfare with constituted authority, and of untiring effort to form a powerful Party with its roots underground and its branches ultimately spreading to every Indian locality where man earns his daily bread by the sweat of his brow or the manipulation of his pen—twelve months at the beginning of which B. F. Bradley had remarked, after a short survey of the situation, "Taking everything into consideration, I think things are going very well."

*Note:—* Since the paragraph entitled "Financial Assistance from Abroad", was printed, the names and movements of three of the "mysterious agents" have been discovered: one of them, Mrs. Constance Mary Sargent was apprehended in Bombay with an ingeniously devised receipt in her personal baggage. The amount of money, a very considerable sum in the aggregate, which these agents have brought into India during the past two years is also known.

## Appendix (vii)

### **The Indian League for Independence**

**Clemens Dutt**

The foundation on an All-India scale of the Indian League for National Independence adds a new body to the already numerous nationalist organisations and groups existing in India, and a significant factor for the course of the struggle between the proletarian and bourgeois elements for the leadership of the fight for national emancipation. Until its session in Madras, at the end of 1927, the Indian National Congress, which claims to represent the central stream of the nationalist movement, had never pronounced its goal to be the complete national independence of India. The aim of National Independence, although repeatedly put forward since the war by a small radical group, was never endorsed by the Congress, ostensibly on the ground that it was too dangerous to express openly or that it was not necessary or practicable, but really owing to the influence of the middle-class nationalists who entertained hopes of establishing harmonious co-operation with the British bourgeoisie in the capitalist development of India and the exploitation of the Indian masses.

Events since the war and the collapse of the non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi have had a shattering influence on these hopes, and the influence of the middle-class leaders has been correspondingly undermined. British Imperialism has been successful in maintaining its monopoly of exploitation, its whole policy has been directed towards strengthening its own stronghold in most direct opposition to the needs and demands of the Indian bourgeoisie. The appointment of the Simon Commission, in complete disregard of Indian nationalist opinion, with its obvious



aim of introducing reforms into the British Administration of India which would enable the British bourgeoisie to consolidate their hold over the country, compelled the Indian bourgeois nationalists to adopt a stronger attitude of opposition. The National Congress was influenced in the same direction by the knowledge that the Indian proletariat was growing in strength and was awakening to independent political activity, that a renewed outburst of revolt on the part of the pauperised peasant masses was becoming more and more likely, and that the impoverished intellectuals and petty bourgeois elements were more and more being faced with the alternative of revolutionary struggle or passive submission to economic ruin. Under this pressure, the Indian National Congress at Madras passed a series of semi-revolutionary resolutions, declaring the goal of the Congress to be complete National Independence, declaring against assistance for British Imperialism in a future war and for support of the International League against Imperialism. At the same time, the Nationalist representatives in the Legislature Assembly and in the Provincial Legislative Councils refused to take part in helping the work of the Simon Commission.

The last year, however, has seen a further development and differentiation in the Nationalist Movement, both in the direction of a move to the Right and of a move to the Left. The upper sections of the Indian bourgeoisie became frightened as a result of the rapid development of the working-class and mass movement. Within the last half-year there has taken place a notable modification in their attitude towards the Simon Commission. All the Legislative Councils have now, after all, appointed Committees to sit with and work with the Simon Commission. At the same time an All-Parties' Conference, representing all sections of the Indian bourgeoisie, including the Liberals and Independents who stand outside and to the Right of the National Congress, has adopted a proposed Constitution for India which is based not on Independence but on the granting to India by the British Parliament of so-called Dominion status within the "British Commonwealth of Nations". That this Conference was presided over by Dr. Ansari, the President of the National Congress in 1928, and its constitution drafted by a

committee headed by this year's President, Mr. Motilal Nehru, is eloquent testimony of the make-believe character of the Independence Resolution of the National Congress in the eyes of its own leaders.

The proposed constitution, embodied in the Nehru Report, which is supported by these Congress leaders on the plea that it represents the greatest common measure of agreement as to India's demands among all the sections of the Nationalist Movement, is naturally governed by the need of obtaining the agreement of the most Right-Wing sections. The constitution has been put before the Simon Commission and, in effect, represents a form of co-operation with the latter. It is explicitly a capitalist constitution and its capitalist character was especially emphasised by the adoption by the All-Parties' Conference of a special resolution inserting a provision in the document that "all titles in private and personal property enjoyed at the establishment of the Commonwealth are hereby guaranteed". Thereby the supporters of the Nehru Report are committed to a drastic pledge given in order to re-assure the big landlords that the Nationalist Movement does not intend to take any steps to deprive them of their property or to divide up their land, and to reassure the British bourgeoisie that their investments and claims to exploitation shall be regarded as a sacred trust by the Indian bourgeoisie.

Under these circumstances of a flagrant abandonment of the Congress declaration on Independence, during a period of growing revolutionisation of the masses, the Left-Wing leaders in the National Congress were compelled to come out more openly in support of the Independence slogan. The contrast between the Nehru report and the declared goal of the National Congress led to a raging controversy on the respective merits of "Dominion status" and "complete independence", which became a first-class debating issue for the Nationalist Press and for political meetings. Those who disagreed with the moderation of the All-Parties Conference came out with the proposal to establish an Indian Independence League to press for their point of view in the country at large. Yet is a remarkable and significant feature of the situation that the sponsors of the League, with few exceptions, were

themselves participants in the All-Parties Conference. The League, in fact, has its origin in the statement read at the All-Parties Conference by Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of Motilal Nehru and acknowledged leader of the younger radical section in the National Congress, a statement endorsed by the signatures of thirty other Congressmen present. They proclaimed that they were supporting the All-Parties Report for the sake of unity without giving up their adherence to the Congress goal of independence in support of which they proposed to form a special organisation.

There was a quick response from all parts of the country. First of all, an organisation was formed in Madras headed by Srinivasa Iyengar, under whose presidency the National Congress had first passed the independence resolution, and who alone among the prominent leaders had refused to take part in the All-Parties Conference on account of its rejection of independence. Later, after a Nationalist Conference in the Punjab had decided that it would support both independence and Dominion status, and Dr. Ansari, the Congress President, had explained that acceptance of the Nehru Report did not prevent Congressmen from maintaining their own standpoint in favour of independence, Mr. Iyengar has also come round to this accommodating view.

The new League, however, first took definite shape in Bengal, where a group of Congress members, headed by Subash Chandra Bose, ex-deportee under the Bengal Ordinance and Joint Secretary of the National Congress, published a manifesto and provisional programme for the League. The programme was adopted with minor alterations in Bombay and elsewhere. This programme itself expresses in the sharpest and clearest form both the positive and the negative aspects of the new movement and provides a key to the contradictory elements within it. The programme is divided into three sections, headed respectively "economic democracy," "political democracy" and "social democracy". Under the second head is the single solitary demand for "complete national independence", with no further items whatever.

The economic programme is the most important section. It is the most far-reaching in character of any programme yet put forward by a bourgeois nationalist organisation. It has a decidedly

socialist tinge. It is lavish in its promises on behalf of the masses. All these things are new in the history of the Indian nationalist movement and reflect the changed conditions of the national struggle. The programme calls for removal of economic inequalities, equitable re-distribution of wealth and nationalisation of key industries and transport services. It demands the eight-hour day, unemployment benefit and other labour legislation for the industrial workers and the introduction of a uniform system of land tenure with annulment of agricultural indebtedness and even abolition of landlordism for the peasants. At the same time, the League really champions Indian capitalist interests, as is seen in the revealing proposal that "all disputes between labour and capital management shall be submitted before an impartial board for arbitration with a view to making strikes and lock-outs unnecessary". Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru has himself defended the labour demands as a necessary part of "enlightened capitalism".

There is no need here to examine the items of the social programme. The programme as a whole is clearly seen to be modelled on the famous tripartite programme of Dr. Sun-Yat-sen with its demands for "nationalism, socialism and democracy". The socialist tinge of the Independence League largely owes its adoption to the active propaganda of Jawaharlal Nehru, who has not only taken every opportunity of stressing that socialism must be one of the aims of the movement, but has also provided the movement with a definite theory of socialist reformism, borrowed from the European social-democratic parties, in relation to the conquest of power. Thus, at the Delhi Political Conference in October, he declared:—

Modern developments of warfare had made organised States terribly powerful. It was impossible to combat the Government by violence. In Europe the new methods of seizing power were based not on violence but on peaceful organisation of workers, peasants and others. That was the only way for India also.

No clearer pronouncement could be required of the essentially non-revolutionary character of the new movement. Jawaharlal Nehru, S.C. Bose and the new Left-Wing of bourgeois nationalism stand forward not as the representatives of revolutionary socialism

but as the champions of reformist social democracy, lavish and exuberant with radical phrase-making but very vague and hesitant when it comes to the means by which their phrases shall be put into practice. It is typical of this attitude that the concrete revolutionary character of the developing mass movement is overlooked and unprovided for. Take, for instance, the developing agrarian revolution, the revolt of the peasant masses against the impossible burdens of feudal, landlord and imperialist oppression. Not only is there no sign that the Independence League is now or will in the future take steps in action to lead the peasants in the struggle, but the fundamental problem of the fight of the peasants against the oppressors is dismissed by the chimerical proposal for the "abolition of landlordism *by indemnification*".

The vacillating, petty-bourgeois character of the Independence League as seen, for instance, in its relation to the All-Parties Conference, has been noted above. It is important to notice also its relation to the existing mass movement. First of all, it should be mentioned that the League, which was constituted as an All-India body for the first time in November, 1928, with Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar as President and S.C. Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru as joint Secretaries, has the support of many prominent Congress workers, but has no mass membership at all. Secondly, it arises at a time when a big strike movement is taking place among Indian workers, when the Indian masses are beginning to enter the arena as an independent political factor and are throwing off their reliance on the leadership of the bourgeois nationalists and reformists, one side of this phenomenon being seen in the growing support given to the new class leadership of the Workers' and Peasants' Party. The Workers' and Peasants' Party has attempted in action to lead the struggles of the workers and peasants, it has formulated the demands of the masses for economic and political emancipation, it was the first organisation to rally strong popular support for the slogan of complete national independence.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible not to see in the Independence for India League a challenge to the Workers' and Peasants' Party, an attempt to regain the ascendancy of the Nationalist bourgeoisie over the masses, which were in danger of

escaping from bourgeois influence. It should be noted also that the leaders of the Independence League have never joined or supported the Workers' and Peasants' Party, and that such typical leaders as S.C. Bose have played a prominent part in liquidating strikes to the satisfaction of the employers.

Hence, a correct estimate of the new development of the situation in India must recognise not only the intensification of the fight against British Imperialism but also the growth of the struggle between the Indian proletariat and the Indian bourgeoisie, a struggle in which the Indian proletariat not only comes into conflict with the Indian bourgeoisie in defence of its class interests, but also fights for hegemony in the national revolution as a whole. The immediate revolutionary tasks which must be accomplished by the Indian masses—the achievement of national emancipation, the destruction of feudalist bondage, the establishment of social and political rights for the workers and peasants—are all tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. There are many stages yet before India can enter upon the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, the present tasks can only be carried out by a movement in which the leading role is played by the proletariat. Petty-bourgeois movements, such as that exemplified by the Independence League, start out with a great display of revolutionary fervour but quickly reveal themselves as tied to the interests of the national bourgeoisie, who will always submit to foreign Imperialism when threatened by class revolution of the masses, and when the moment of action comes they collapse like the bubble of revolutionary Gandhism. Their part is played if they help to bring the masses into action. When they begin to hinder the development of revolutionary mass action, they are already a counter-revolutionary force.

## **Appendix (viii)**

### **The Role and Leadership of the Indian Working Class**

**Clemens Dutt**

The events of the past year in India leave no ground for uncertainty as to the advance of the revolutionary tide there. They fully confirm the estimate of a year ago that a new period of advance was opening out, the distinctive character of which consisted in the leading role played by the Indian proletariat. Since then a good deal has happened. The strike wave has continued and developed, assuming an increasing political importance. British Imperialism, acting through the Labour Government, has adopted the most ferocious measures of repression directed primarily against the mass movement. The nationalist movement has passed through a rapid process of evolution and differentiation, exposing the make-believe and treachery of the Indian bourgeoisie including even the so-called "extremist" leaders, and greatly accelerating the anti-imperialist and revolutionary understanding of the Indian masses.

It would, however, be erroneous to suggest that the Indian proletariat has already established in fact its leadership of the revolutionary forces. The noteworthy feature of the present situation is that events have clearly demonstrated that without such leadership the struggle against imperialism and exploitation cannot be carried on, but that the Indian working class is not yet sufficiently strongly organised and class-conscious for it to assume fully its historic role of leadership in the Indian revolution. The peasant masses and the revolutionary rank and file of the organised nationalist movement are moving towards participation in mass struggle, but unless the Indian working class can establish not only political ascendancy over them, but also clear organisational forms through

which that ascendancy can be expressed, the danger of surrender to the influence of the Indian bourgeoisie will always be present. This is the fundamental problem of the present period.

### **The Advance of the Proletariat**

The continued attacks against the workers, the process of introducing rationalisation in Indian industry going forward mainly at their expense, and the developed methods of persecution and terrorism set in operation by the employers and the Government, have contributed very largely to the consolidation and education of the Indian working class. In the strike movement a great advance over 1928 is observable in the more militant and resolute attitude of the strikers, the great intensity of class feeling among them, the extension of the organisation of workers' committees and factory councils, the vastly heightened political significance of the strike struggles and the general spreading of an understanding of the class-struggle.

The struggle of the Bombay textile workers is typical of the advance that has taken place. The opposition they have had to encounter is incomparably greater than last year. First came the attempt in February to drown their struggle in the blood bath of the communal riots. Then came the arrest of all the chief leaders in the Meerut case. There followed at once the Fawcett textile report in favour of the employers which immediately stimulated the process that had already begun of victimisation and further attacks on wages and conditions. In spite of all this, the general strike called in April met with a unanimous response from the workers. The strike was met with the use of armed police and troops, the curfew order, prohibition of meetings, extensive importation of blacklegs and the passing of the Intimidation Act to prevent picketing. The reformist union appeared in the full role of a blackleg union and attempts were also made to sabotage the strike by the setting up of a so-called "blue" union by the employers directly and by the formation of a "green" Mohammedan union on a religious basis. The Bombay nationalists also came out in direct opposition to the strike and the Bombay Congress organisation voted money and means for open propaganda against the strike. Yet in the face of all



this the strike went on; the workers departed for their village homes in large numbers and their places were gradually filled by new men. Finally, in the middle of September, the Girni Kamgar Union was compelled to call off the strike without making conditions.

Only a few of the factors in the campaign against the textile workers have been mentioned above. The Girni Kamgar Union, the mass union of the textile workers with in Red Flag badge, aroused such rage and fury among the capitalists and British Imperialists not so much on account of the strike, but because it gave a lesson to the whole Indian working class by practical experience of the meaning of class-consciousness and militant struggle. The campaign against the "communist menace" has been a key-note of imperialist propaganda during the year. The report of the Riots Inquiry Committee set up to investigate the causes of the February communal riots and the report of the Textile Strike Inquiry Committee (consisting of three capitalist lawyers), appointed by the Government in July under the new Trade Disputes Act, are both made to serve as a means of attacking communism and the Girni Kamgar Union.

The Riots Committee examined eighty witnesses. According to the Press reports of the evidence, very few of them said that communist propaganda had anything to do with the riots and a number of prominent Indian public men emphatically denied that there was any connection. Nevertheless, the European Association made a strong statement declaring that the riots had their origin in the teaching of communist doctrines by labour leaders, that the Girni Kamgar Union was a communist union responsible for the rapid progress of communism in Bombay and that special measures should be taken against it. It is noticeable that the Report of the Committee does not print any of the written statements or oral evidence but gives their verdict exactly on the lines of what was said by the European Association. Their first and primary recommendation is: *"(1) Government should take drastic action against the activities of the communists in Bombay."* The following quotations are interesting evidence of the nature of the report:

It is admitted before us by the Treasurer of the Union that some of the leaders of the Union are communists, but a distinction

is sought to be drawn between the policy of the individual leaders and that of the Union. This is a distinction without a difference.. . . . The very fact that the Union is known as the Red Flag Union, and that its symbols are a hammer and sickle, shows that it is a communist organisation.

We are of opinion that, in addition to action under the Intimidation Act, strict action should be taken when necessary against communist agitators under the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. We are also of opinion that it should be considered whether section 22 of the Trade Union Act should not be amended so as to exclude communists from the management of any registered trade union.

### **The Attack on the Girni Kamgar Union**

The Report of the Court of Inquiry into the 1929 textile strike carries the attack against the Girni Kamgar Union a good deal further. This report does not deal with general allegations of "communism" but concerns itself directly with the actual structure, administration and policy of the union. One of the biggest problems with which British Imperialism is confronted in dealing with the growing revolutionary wave in India is that of preventing trade union organisation from entering the path of militant class-struggle. The growth of the Girni Kamgar Union, which is being taken as a model by other left-wing unions in India, has been sufficient to prove to the imperialists that it is necessary for them to take drastic action in order to mutilate and mould Indian trade union organisation into an exact copy of the reformist type developed in Britain by long years of imperialist corruption.

The first object of attack is what the Inquiry Report calls the "aggressive propaganda" of the Girni Kamgar Union. It declares:—

The Girni Kamgar Union has been described in the leaflets as the Red Flag Union, and its avowed object appears to be the destruction of capitalism.

The report quotes extracts from the leaflets and from the mill workers' paper *Kranti* (Revolution) to illustrate this. Thus, the *Kranti* declares:—

The Bombay workmen unfurled the Red Flag in order to fight the owners and establish their union, and since then the owners are thinking how to kill this union. The owners were afraid that the mill committees of the Union were following the steps of the "factory soviets" in Russia, and that, as in Russia, this "Soviet" here will one day kick out the owners and establish the Labour Raj, and, therefore, in order to settle it finally they have declared war on the Red Flag.— (*Kranti*, May 19, 1929.)

But how will the agitation be stopped by arresting the leaders? Or how is the movement to be killed by declaring it to be illegal? Because the fight of the Red Flag is not dependent on the leaders, but will continue as long as capitalism is in existence. It will continue as long as the owners make money by looting workmen and until the unjust existence of capitalism is. . . But the agitation which has been started by the workmen suffering under repression of capitalism and imperialism, not only of India but of the whole world, cannot be stopped by one or many Governments. In the world the Red Flag has never submitted before any Government.—(*Kranti*, June 16, 1929.)

The gap in the second quotation was left so in the Report; apparently the statement was too dangerous to reprint. The main object of attack in the report, however, is not the character of its propaganda, but its factory basis of organisation. The rules say that the Mill Committees are to be purely advisory. Accordingly, the Report says:—

There is hardly anything to quarrel with in the rules of the Union as framed. These rules make out the Union to have a sane constitution.

But even before the General Strike, the Mill Committees began to deal with local grievances on their own account and even to call local strikes. That this was freely tolerated is described as "an act on the part of the G.K. Union which clearly disclosed a revolutionary tendency".

The whole of the Report is devoted to the attack on the Girni Kamgar Union. The aim of this attack is to prevent the development of trade union organisations which will not work in harmony with capitalism. In this connection it is interesting to note the interchange

of remarks between Mr. Ranadive, one of the officials of the G.K. Union, and Mr. Mody, the Chairman of the Bombay Mill-owners' Association. Mr. Mody complained that the G.K. Union was not following "recognised trade union principles".

Mr. Ranadive : What are recognised methods?

Mr. Mody : In the case of a dispute to try and bring about a settlement by negotiations and not to provoke strike after strike.

Mr. Ranadive : Do other trade unions follow these recognised methods?

Mr. Mody : I should think so.

Mr. Ranadive : Is it not true that you were out for a fight to a finish in regard to the present strike?

Mr. Mody : I have already stated that the moment we found ourselves confronted with a Union which was bent upon the destruction of capitalism and organised industries we recognised that we had to fight it some day.

The whole of this experience in Bombay, together with similar experiences elsewhere and the gigantic object lesson of the Meerut trial, provides a political education for the Indian working class which is extremely rapidly raising their whole struggle to a higher plane and the effect of which reaches out to vast numbers beyond those actually participating at the moment in the strike movement. The political significance of strike action has been so underlined, and the Meerut trial has done so much to popularise the slogans of militant mass struggle, that a widespread consciousness of the international importance of the workers' movement has developed out of the very efforts of the imperialists to stifle its growth. The cries of "Down with British Imperialism", "Long live the Indian revolution" and even the call for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and a Soviet India have not only spread everywhere among the workers and replaced the old shouts for Mahatma Gandhi and the National Congress, but have become common also on the lips of political demonstrators not belonging to the working class. Thus, it may be noticed that these proletarian slogans were brought forward in the manifesto of Bhagat Singh and Dutt, the two nationalists who were convicted of throwing a bomb in the Legislative Assembly, and they have been repeated by some of the

accused nationalists on trial in the Lahore Conspiracy case and have been widely taken up by nationalist youth sections and mass demonstrations in support of Indian political prisoners. All this testifies to the marked growth of the leadership and influence of the revolutionary proletariat over the revolutionary sections of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry.

At the present time not only are the bitter conflicts of the Tata tinplate workers and of the oil strikers in Bengal as well as various minor textile and other strikes still being waged, but it is possible that a further big strike on the railways may soon break out. Various sections of the organised railwaymen are calling for a general strike on the railways, a proposal which was only rejected at the All India Railwaymen's Federation earlier in the year by a small majority. The following recent note in the Indian Press on the large mass meetings of railwaymen being held in Cawnpore is typical of what is happening in most parts :—

Processions with red flags passed through the railway colony singing various songs, the common theme being "Victory for Labour" and "Workers of the world unite."

### **The Policy of the Whitley Commission**

In the face of these developments, the policy of British Imperialism is two-fold. In the first place, it uses every legal and arbitrary weapon to crush and destroy militant working class organisation and especially the incipient growth of a communist party. In the second place, alongside of the weapon of terror, it seeks to promote and encourage such forms of Indian labour organisation as will docilely fit in with the general scheme of imperialist exploitation. This, of course, is the outstanding object of the Whitley Royal Commission on Labour now touring India.

The Whitley Commission is the direct counterpart to the Meerut trial. The function of the one is to destroy, that of the other to build up. The spokesman of the Labour Government at the Labour Party Conference expressed his concern for "genuine trade unionism" in India, a phrase which has the same meaning as "sane trade unionism" employed in the Textile Inquiry Report quoted above, and which takes us back to the "sane trade unionism" of

Mr. Osborne of the Osborne judgment, whose principles are now being enforced through the medium of those who once opposed him. "Sane" trade unions are those which served as useful adjuncts to the working of Capitalism and it is the concern of British Imperialism, as it is that of Indian Capitalism, to see that Indian labour organisation is guided into the channel of class collaboration and kept away from militant class-struggle. The membership of the Whitley Commission is eloquent of its function. Mr. Whitley has the same task as he had in England in 1917. He has to turn the attention of Indian workers away from militancy while at the same time securing acquiescence in wage attacks and speeding up. Of the twelve members of the Commission, only two are connected with Indian trade unionism, but one of them is the reactionary General Secretary of the Indian Trade Union Congress. Nevertheless, the fight for boycott of the Commission is a very keen one and the division between the right and left wing in the Trade Union Congress which meets in Nagpur early in December will centre round this issue.

• The issue is, however, not a simple one between militants and reformists because of the national issue involved. Many nominal leaders of Indian trade union organisations are bourgeois nationalists who have entered the movement in order to ensure that the masses remain under bourgeois leadership. For them, boycott of the Whitley Commission is only a political manoeuvre subsidiary to the main object of preventing attack on Indian capitalists. Thus, for instance, the United Provinces Provincial Trade Union Conference last September decided to boycott the Whitley Commission but the following quotation from Mr. Das Tandon, one of the prominent speakers, shows the kind of statement that was made at the same time:—

To lead a campaign of class war against your countrymen merely because they are capitalists or owners of land would be a suicidal policy and would help the foreign Government which we desire to replace by our own. Look at England itself! Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party are in power. Do they regard the labourers of other countries as their brethren whose interests they have to safeguard in preference to the

interests of the capitalists of their own country? The answer is an obvious negative.

However apposite the comment on the Labour Party, the open fear of the Indian working class is a motive force which is driving the speaker and his allies into the arms of the British imperialists. This retreat before the working class is the governing factor in the nationalist movement and has been doubly emphasised by the events following the Irwin proclamation.

### **The Reaction on the Indian National Congress**

What is the position with regard to the bourgeois leadership of the Indian National Congress? The advance of the proletariat during the past year has had its reaction in the corresponding retreat of the bourgeois nationalists. Already at the Calcutta session last December, the main feature was the actual surrender of the demand for independence, the secondary and complementary feature being the face-saving unreal ultimatum and threat of mass action a year ahead.

During the year this dual policy has been accentuated. Nothing was done to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle. At the same time, in spite of the increasing anti-working class attitude of the chief leaders, the revolutionary phraseology about a coming "life and death struggle" and the expectation of action rallied a certain mass support to the Congress. After a recruiting campaign, the membership of the Congress was returned at about 450,000 at the end of September, at least four times the figure of a year ago. It may be noted in passing that even this figure falls short by about 140,000 from the quota arrived at, although the latter was taken as only one in four hundred of the population of the provinces of British India. To fulfil such a quota it is only necessary to recruit one or two persons from each village. These would in all probability be well-to-do peasants or landlords or petty bourgeois elements, and therefore even such a figure does not greatly affect the social composition of the Congress.

The hypocrisy and impotence of Indian bourgeois nationalism is not due to lack of reason for conflict with British Imperialism. In fact, the many points for discord between them have been

accentuated recently because the latter, instead of giving the Indian bourgeoisie facilities for progress and development, is actually driving them out of positions (as in the case of the iron and steel industry) which they formerly held.

If, then, in spite of serious grounds for conflict, the Indian bourgeoisie are reduced to practical subservience to Imperialism, the reason is to be found in their abject fear in the face of the advancing Indian workers and peasants. This is forcibly brought out in the definite co-operation of the nationalists in the campaign of repression as far as it strikes at the working class movement, as seen, for instance, their support of the Trade Disputes Act and the failure to organise a campaign on behalf of the Meerut prisoners.

Yet Gandhi retreated to make way for the "left" nationalist Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the coming National Congress. This was only a move in the game and was intended more as a gesture to reassure the rank and file, who were becoming restive, than as a means to intimidate the British Government. Gandhi had openly declared the impossibility of fighting and as usual in such cases he puts the blame on the masses. He openly said that he was "sceptical about the forthcoming fight." He declared that it was a "gross misrepresentation to say that the masses are impatient to be led to civil disobedience but that I am hanging back. I can only lead people who are prepared . . . . I see no such signs on the horizon."

Accordingly, Jawaharlal Nehru was put forward as the best chance of maintaining the ascendancy of the Congress over the masses. The Labour Government replied with the Irwin declaration with its vague promise of "Dominion Status" at the end of a long vista of time, a gesture as empty and in sincere as the threat that it was supposed to meet. The whole thing was a piece of play acting which involved the tacit or secret collaboration of the two parties. The Labour Government only gave a very shadowy pretence of yielding to the paper sword of the National Congress. The Indian Nationalists only pretended that the gesture could be regarded as a hopeful move towards the satisfaction of their demands. But the underlying reality was that the Indian reformists, including their left spokesman, made a deal with the British bourgeoisie, acting



through its Labour agents, for joint collaboration against a possible mass revolt.

Why then the outburst of criticism from the Tory and Liberal politicians? Essentially, there were two reasons. Firstly, to assist the Labour Government in making a show with their gesture by giving it the appearance of going above the authority of the Simon Commission. Secondly, to make it perfectly clear to the Labour agents of Imperialism that they were only agents and that under no pressure may they depart one iota from the path prescribed by Imperialism.

The resulting position is of especial interest as immediately affecting the future of the Indian National Congress and the role and leadership of the Indian proletariat. The document accepting the gesture of Imperialism is signed by all the chief liberals and the main leaders of the Congress, including the young Nehru, the pillar of the left wing. After expressing the appreciation and hope resulting from the Viceroy's message, it sets down the following conditions :—

- (1) A policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere.
- (2) Political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty.
- (3) The representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured, and that the Indian National Congress, as the largest among them, should have a predominant representation.

We understand that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion Status for India.

Naturally, British Imperialism is not likely to accept these conditions. That has already been made clear and some of the signatories are said to have withdrawn their support. Such vacillations are to be expected but do not alter the significance in any way of having once signed such a document. The essential result is a terrific exposure of the Congress as a whole, left as well as right, sons as well as fathers, revealing the inherent impossibility of the Congress as an organ of the Indian bourgeoisie ever being capable of functioning as the leader of a mass struggle against British Imperialism.

It is in decisive moments like this that the real alignment and role of such apparently intermediate sections as the I.L.P. in Britain and the "left" nationalists in India is plainly exposed. Just as the leaders of the I.L.P. line up with the Labour Government on this issue, where they had pretended to criticise them, so do the Independence Leaguers make a common front with the rest of the bourgeoisie in India. The effect will be evident to all at the coming Lahore Congress, where the question of action against British Imperialism, except perhaps in the most limited and unreal form, will once again be shelved.

### **The Future of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle**

The Congress movement has passed a turning point. It can confidently be predicted that the mass following of the Congress will once again fall away. This last betrayal denotes the end of the role of the Indian National Congress even as the pretended leader of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Following the lead of the National Congress are many elements who had pinned their hopes on a victory of the left bourgeois nationalists in the Congress as signifying the opening of a radical struggle against Imperialism. The last events must open their eyes to the impossibility of any uncompromising struggle under bourgeois leadership whether left or right. The way forward now is to be found only in a frank recognition that the Indian proletariat is the sole possible leader in the struggle for national, as well as for social emancipation. The rank and file of the Congress must co-operate with the Indian working class in building up new forms of organisation for the national struggle in which bourgeois leadership will be eliminated.

How far can the working class be certain to secure its class leadership in such new forms of organisation? Clearly it can do so only in proportion as these new forms are dominated by mass organisations of the working class and in proportion as the political party of the working class, the Communist Party, is organised and developed. Such a bloc comprising petty bourgeois and peasant as well as working class elements may be constituted by a mass organisation of the League against Imperialism. As long as it

remains a mass body in which working class leadership is organised and expressed and is constituted as a joint body with limited aims for action during a certain limited period, it will have an important function to fulfil in the struggle.

The time is ripe for the working class in India to take the full leadership of the national struggle. It can only do so if it is itself led by a militant class-conscious organisation. That is the factor which is holding back the development of the mass national struggle for the overthrow of Imperialism. In spite of repression and persecution, in spite of the joint onslaughts of British Imperialism and Indian Capitalism, the working class in India is going forward towards the accomplishment of its historic tasks. A period has opened in which one year witnesses a development outstripping that of a past decade, and it is precisely now that all the revolutionary classes look expectantly for the leadership of the Communist Party, which in international alliance with the militant workers of the world will guarantee the success of the Indian revolution.

## **Appendix (ix)**

### **Manifesto of AITUC given in Nagpur Session**

#### **Manifesto of All-India Trade Union Congress.**

THE outstanding feature of the session of the All-India Trade Union Congress held at Nagpur at the end of November and beginning of December last year was the decision of a section of reformist leaders, on their defeat in the Executive Council of the T.U.C., to secede from the A.I.T.U.C. and to establish a rival body to be called the All-India Trade Union Federation.

The seceders obviously acted on their own initiative and without consulting the trade unions which they were supposed to represent. The proceedings of the conference of the seceders, which was held under the presidentship of Chamanlal (a member of the Government Whitley Commission at present on tour in India investigating labour conditions), clearly indicate the character of their move. Resolutions were passed supporting the Whitley Commission, accepting the Round-Table Conference proposed by the Government nominating delegates, for confirmation by the Government, to the Geneva Conference of the International Labour Office of the League of Nations. All these were resolutions which the A.I.T.U.C. had refused to pass. The seceders were faced with a choice between working class solidarity and co-operation with imperialism, and they choose the latter.

The new General Secretary of the A.I.T.U.C., S.V. Deshpande, has issued the following manifesto on the Nagpur session on behalf of the A.I.T.U.C. as an answer of the militant working class to the splitting policy of the right-wing leaders.

**Manifesto on the Nagpur Session of the A.I.T.U.C.**

The existence, life and growth of trade unions in India is of the most vital importance to the Indian workers. To fight against the oppression of foreign imperialists and our own capitalists, millowners and others, against miserable wages, long hours, terrible housing conditions, to fight against starvation of working class families, Indian workers have just one means, and that is by organising their ranks, building strong united organisations of the working class militant trade unions. Strong working class organisations pursuing militant class policy will be able to compel the millowners and other oppressors to grant the demands of the workers.

The textile workers of Bombay suffered a temporary defeat because of the united brutal efforts of Indian millowners and British imperialism, and also the fact that the textile workers of Bombay stood along without the assistance of other textile centres. The jute workers of Bengal suffered defeat in their local strikes because they were disorganised. The same is true about the railway workers.

Strong trade unions are vital to the very existence of the working class, to the success of their many struggles to better their conditions. And, in spite of that, a section of the so-called leaders arranged a split at the last Trade Union Congress at Nagpur.

These Right-Wing Leaders split away because the Trade Union Congress decided to boycott the Whitley Commission. *This every worker must remember and understand.* The task of the Whitley Commission appointed by British imperialism is to fool the workers and help to stabilise and strengthen the exploitation of the workers. This Commission, dominated by capitalists like the Bombay millowner, Sir Victor Sassoon, who, by starvation plus brutal force, temporarily defeated the textile workers of Bombay, is not going to help workers. Its sole purpose is to help imperialism and the millowners and other capitalists. The workers will not allow themselves to be fooled again by promises of the Imperialist

Commission into giving support to imperialism by participating in the Commission. The workers can improve their lot only by fighting for freedom, for independence, and by organising their own forces. This must be clear to every rank and file worker.

The Trade Union Congress was correct in deciding in boycott this Commission and taking a stand for militant struggle. And the Right-Wing leaders, lawyears and bar-at-laws Chamanlal, Joshi & c., who never suffered as the workers in the mill suffered, joined the Whitley Commission, became members of it, thus betraying the struggle for betterment of the conditions of Indian workers. The Right-Wing leaders, who best represent the interests of millowners, were not content with this betrayal and in order to weaken the Indian working class, which has now become the leader and standard bearer of the struggle for Indian independence, they decided to split the ranks of trade unions.

Every worker must remember this fact. The Right-Wing leaders split away in order to weaken the economical and political struggle of the Indian workers. They split away to help British imperialism and Indian capitalists. The Right-Wing leaders had no mandate from the rank and file to split the trade union movement. Considering themselves lords over the "poor, ignorant" workers, they thought it was not necessary to ask the workers.

The Right-Wing splitters decided to split because they are against the militant struggle of the workers. They feel and see the coming struggle of the workers in textile, jute, steel industries and on the railways. They are anxious again to disorganise the struggle as they did in the past. In order to weaken these struggles they have arranged this split. But the jute workers of Bengal, the railwaymen and the textile workers of Bombay, Madras and Ahmedabad understand their motives and will give a fitting answer by strengthening their unions under militant leadership and organising themselves for the coming struggle.

The Nagpur Session of the T.U.C. has shown again the necessity of developing militant working class leadership from the rank of

the workers themselves, true to the interest of the workers. The Right-Wing leaders, with the ease of intellectuals caring only for their own ambitions, split the Trade Union Congress. The intellectual reformist leaders betray the workers in every strike and do their best to make the workers voluntary slaves of Capitalism. The reformist intellectual leaders use workers to make their own careers in Assembly, at Geneva, & c., and now that the Indian proletariat and the Trade Union Congress have given warning that they will put a stop to this, the frightened assistants of the bourgeoisie are trying to preserve themselves as parasites of the labour movement by precipitating the split. It is in vain. The pygmies, Chamanlals &c., cannot keep the giant Indian proletariat chained. True militant genuine worker leadership is coming.

The Right-Wing leaders in their ambitions do not understand that the class-consciousness of the Indian workers is growing. The time has come when Indian workers are able to judge themselves and are able to put forward militant leadership from their own ranks. The Right-Wing leaders do not understand the historical significance of the past political labour demonstrations and the struggle of textile workers of Bombay. The Right-Wing leaders, anxious to give voluntary police service to British imperialism by accusing the Left Wingers as being "Moscow" Agents, are trying, by all means, to stop the forward movement of the working class. It is in vain. Short-sighted reformists, assistants of British imperialism, your efforts are futile! The militant Indian working class understands your machinations and judges you by your deeds. The textile workers of Bombay repudiated Joshi and created a powerful textile union—the Girmi Kamgar Union—which you are slandering and condemning in chorus with British imperialism and the millowners for its militant working class stand. But the same fate awaits the rest of the reformist leaders who are now trying to weaken and split labour ranks. They will find themselves in the garbage can of history. The militant Indian working class will triumph.

Our answer to this splitting policy of Right-Wing leaders, these self-appointed defenders of British imperialism is:—

**Down with the Right-Wing leaders, splitting and weakening the ranks of Indian workers!**

**Long live the unity of the Indian workers!**

**Long live the struggle for independence!**

**Down with the Whitley Commission!**

**Prepare for the struggles to improve the workers' conditions!**

**Every worker into the Union. Cent per cent. organisation in Indian working class!**

**Forward to new militant genuine working class leadership!**

**Stand by the Trade Union Congress!**

**S. V. DESHPANDE,**  
*General Secretary.*



## Appendix (x)

### **Faked Indian Statistics as Imperialist Propaganda**

**V. Chattopadhyaya**

Notwithstanding the assurance given to the Indian Nationalists by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald that the Report of the Simon Commission will not form the sole basis of the discussions at the coming Round-Table Conference, there is no doubt that all the three Imperialist parties of Great Britain will insist on attaching the greatest importance to the so-called evidence contained in that Report. Tens of thousands of copies have been published at "Government expense" and disposed of either by sale or by free distribution. Hundreds of thousands of persons have read the detailed summary published by *The Times*. The Report is being very widely circulated in the United States to counteract the pro-Indian attitude of a certain section of the American bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. It is being translated into a number of European languages, and it has already had a very favourable reception in the bourgeois, including, of course, the Social-Democratic, press, of almost all countries.

The Simon Report is, in fact, the culmination of a long series of books, pamphlets and newspaper articles that have been published, during the last four decades particularly, to create a deliberately perverted and distorted view of the history and present condition of the Indian people, and to generate a universal sense of contempt for their alleged inferiority, backwardness, helplessness, and internal strife and dissension, in order to justify British Imperialist exploitation—called by MacDonald the "civilising mission of Capitalism"—in the eyes of the "civilised world". The Report is one of the most insidious of these lying publications, because it is

taken to be an authoritative and impartial statement by seven "honest Englishmen", and its effectiveness as a poison is further enhanced by the fact that it has the imprimatur of a so-called Labour Government.

The Simon Report, like all Imperialist propaganda against the subject races, is based on the principle that lies about the latter should be repeated as frequently, persistently and plausibly as possible until they come to be accepted as facts. In this respect the Simon Report has been fairly successful. In Volume I, in summing up the "conditions of the problem," the Report gives a number of "statistical data," with such an air of accuracy and finality that most people have so far questioned only the conclusions that have been drawn from these, but not the honesty and accuracy of the statistics themselves.

In the reviews of Volume I, that have appeared in the Imperialist and pro-Imperialist press (from the *Morning Post* and *The Times* to the *Daily Herald* and the *New Leader*), tributes have been unanimously paid to the correctness of the "evidence" presented in the Report. There is, of course, nothing very surprising when Lord Meston, who had himself been a Governor in India, writes in the *Contemporary Review* (August issue) that he "would like to add a tribute to its accuracy" and that the Report "is a convincing statement of the conditions of the problem." But even "Left-wing" Labour leaders, who want us to believe that they are fighting Imperialism and Capitalism, make exactly the same kind of statements as Lord Meston. For instance, in the *New Leader* of June 13, Fenner Brockway writes :—

Even those of us who from the first have opposed the Simon Commission must admit that it has done its work courageously and thoroughly..... Furthermore, appreciation must be expressed, so far as this first report is concerned, of the *care* with which Sir John Simon and his colleagues have approached their task. I doubt whether the most extreme Nationalist will be able to point to serious inaccuracies on major facts, though they will dispute, of course, the significance of the facts (My emphasis—V.Ch.).

And H.W. Nevinson writes even more dogmatically in the same journal (June 27):—

Let me clear out of the way two aspects that are inevitably insisted upon by all defenders of British Rule in India. They are *rightly insisted upon, but now may be taken for granted by all who speak with knowledge and reason*. First, the almost insuperable difficulty of constructing (not criticising) a constitution or form of Government to suit a minor continent including 560 native Indian States (nominally independent), races of 222 separate languages, peoples of two main and hostile religions (168,000,000 Hindus and 60,000,000 Moslems in British India alone), 10,000,000 outcasted or “depressed” populations, also called “Untouchables,” and treated as such..... *Everyone who thinks of India ought to know these bare facts to start with*. If he does not know, he should read Vol.I of the Report. If he neither knows nor reads, let him hold his peace. (My emphasis—V.Ch.)

We have quoted Nevinson at some length because the form in which he sums up and accepts the “bare facts” gives us a picture of the impression about India that has been created in millions of ignorant minds by British Imperialist propaganda. The object of this propaganda is to terrorise people with “facts and figures” intended to prove the “immensity and difficulty” of the Indian “problem,” arising from the “immensity of area and population,” the “complication of language,” the “rigid complication of innumerable castes”, the “almost infinite diversity in its religious aspect,” the eternal hostilities of the religious communities, &c. (the expressions are all taken from the Simon Report). And the conclusion to be drawn about “this variegated assemblage of races and creeds,” this “congeries of heterogeneous masses” that is known as India, is that the 320 millions inhabiting that extraordinarily disrupted and chaotic country ought to be thankful to British imperialism for having given them a “common government” and protection from “foreign invasion” (the British Imperialist occupation not, of course, belonging to that category).

Now, not only are the true facts relating to the social and economic condition of the Indian people completely suppressed in

the Report—data, *e.g.*, regarding wages, unemployment, housing conditions, famines, disease, mortality, profits of Imperialist exploitation, cost and results of the vast system of espionage, victims of militarism and Imperialist terror, &c.—but even the “statistical data” contained in the Simon Report and other official Imperialist publications can be proved to be deliberate fabrications. We shall here deal with only a few of the most flagrant of these.

### 1. Languages

There is no lie so sedulously repeated and so widely believed, even by “educated” Indians themselves, as the statement that hundreds of different languages are spoken in India. This legend was deliberately created by the *Linguistic Survey of India*, which was supposed to study and classify the various languages and dialects from the point of view of their family affiliations. Every “civilised government” undertakes such surveys periodically in its country, but it is only the Imperialist colonial Governments that use the results of a philological survey for “proving” that the number of languages and dialects makes it impossible for the subject countries to govern themselves.

But even as regards the number of languages in India, the Imperialist experts hopelessly contradict one another. The Simon Report (on the basis of the Census Report of 1921) gives the figure with plausible exactness as “222 vernaculars”. The latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Article on India) says that “no fewer than 220 *distinct* languages are recorded as vernaculars in the country”. Lord Birkenhead, in a speech he made as Secretary of State for India, to show that Indians were unfit for self-government, put the figure at 200. Sir Thomas Holdich in his book on India says there are “50 languages”. While the late Sir John Rees, a rabid Imperialist, put the figures at 16! And the maximum British figure of 222 has been further improved by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, who advocates English as the language of his Pan-Euröpa, one of the grounds being that it has already become the common language of the 300 million Indians who speak 300 different languages!

The very fact, indeed, that the figures vary from 16 to 222 in Imperialist publications is itself a convincing proof of deliberate

fabrication of statistics with mischievous intent. But the whole swindle becomes still more obvious when we look into the Census Reports of the Indian Government. We reproduce opposite, side by side, the tables contained in the Reports for 1901 and 1921.

By comparing these two tables we arrive at the amazing result that, whereas the population increased from 292 millions in 1901 to 316 millions in 1921 (without any influx of new foreign populations), the number of languages increased from 147 in 1901 to 222 in 1921 (without the addition of any new or polyglot territories).

| 1901                                  |                  |                 | 1921                                |                  |                 |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| (Vol.I, Part I, p.248)                |                  |                 | (Vol.I, Part I, p.193)              |                  |                 |
| A. VERNACULARS OF INDIA               |                  |                 | A. VERNACULARS OF INDIA             |                  |                 |
| Group                                 | No. of Languages | No. of Speakers | Group                               | No. of Languages | No. of Speakers |
| MALAYO-POLYNESIAN FAMILY(MALAY group) | 2                | 7,831           | AUSTRIC FAMILY                      |                  | 4,529,351       |
|                                       |                  |                 | Austronesian Sub-Family ... ..      | 2                |                 |
| INDO-CHINESE FAMILY                   |                  | 11,712,299      | Austro-Asiatic Sub-Family:Mon-Khmer |                  |                 |
| Mon-Khmer Sub-Family ... ..           | 4                |                 | Branch ... ..                       | 10               |                 |
| Tibeto-Burman Sub-Family ... ..       | 79               |                 | Munda Branch .                      | 7                |                 |
| Siamese-Chinese Sub-Family ... ..     | 9                |                 | TIBETO-CHINESE FAMILY               |                  | 12,885,346      |
| DRAVIDO-MUNDA FAMILY .. ..            |                  | 59,693,799      | Tibeto-Burman Sub-Family .. ..      | 134              |                 |
| Munda Sub-Family                      | 10               |                 | Tai-Chinese Sub-Family ... ..       | 11               |                 |
| Dravidian Sub-Family                  | 14               |                 | KAREN FAMILY                        | 15               | 1,114,026       |
| INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY                  |                  | 221,157,673     | MAN FAMILY...                       | 2                | 591             |
| Erastian Branch ..                    | 1                |                 | DRAVIDIAN FAMILY                    |                  | 64,128,052      |
| Indo-Aryan Branch                     | 22               |                 | Dravida Group ...                   | 7                |                 |
| SEMITIC FAMILY                        | 1                | 42,881          | Intermediate Group                  | 5                |                 |
| HAMITIC FAMILY                        | 1                | 5,530           | Andhra Language                     | 1                |                 |
| UNCLASSED LANGUAGES                   | 2                | 346,150         | North-Western Language              | 1                |                 |
| Andamanese ... ..                     |                  |                 | INDO-EUROPEAN                       |                  | 232,846,549     |
| Gipsy ... ..                          |                  |                 | Erastian Branch ...                 | 2                |                 |
|                                       |                  |                 | Dardic Branch ...                   | 4                |                 |
|                                       |                  |                 | Indo-Aryan Branch                   | 19               |                 |
|                                       |                  |                 | UNCLASSED LANGUAGES                 |                  | 15,598          |
|                                       |                  |                 | Andamanese ...                      | 1                |                 |
|                                       |                  |                 | Gipsy ... ..                        | 1                |                 |
| Total ... ..                          | 147              | 292,966,163     | Total ... ..                        | 222              | 316,056,183     |

In order, however, to realise fully what is called a "language," we must take the above tables in conjunction with the list of Indo-Chinese languages published in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. I, pp. 390-394 (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1909). In this list of 103 languages we are given the number of speakers of each of these "different languages," and we find, *e.g.*, the following figures:—

| Name of Language | No. of Speakers |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Kabui .. .. .    | 4               |
| Andro .. .. .    | 1               |
| Kasui .. .. .    | 11              |
| Bhranu .. .. .   | 15              |
| Thukuni .. .. .  | 26              |
| Aka .. .. .      | 26              |
| Nora .. .. .     | 2               |
| Tairong .. .. .  | 12              |

On closely studying the tables we find :—

- that the number of "languages" of the so-called Indo-Chinese Family rose from 92 in 1901 to 145 in 1921;
- that these "languages" are not spoken in India at all, but in outlying districts in the Himalayas and the Burma-Chinese frontier;
- that the vast majority of these are not languages at all but either very minor dialects or names of tribes;
- that out of the 103 "languages" included in the Tibeto-Chinese group, 17 are spoken by less than 100 persons; 39 by less than 1,000; 65 by less than 10,000; 83 by less than 50,000; 91 by less than 100,000; 97 by less than 200,000!

The only *language* in the group is Burmese.

To these figures must be added the two "languages" of the so-called "Man group" represented by 591 speakers in all; the Andamanese language with 580 speakers in all; the Gipsy "languages" with a total of 15,018 speakers; two "Austronesian languages" with a total of 5,561 speakers, &c.

This is the way in which more than 200 of the 222 "languages" have been fabricated, and we are then seriously told that these languages constitute a "constitutional problem".

It is not possible here to go into any further details of the linguistic statistics, but if we wish to arrive at the correct number of languages spoken in India, we must dismiss as wholly absurd all the above-mentioned inventions as well as dozens of dialects that are spoken among hill-tribes by a few hundred thousand people, but that are seriously included as languages (although, even according to the Census Report of 1921, Vol. I, Part I, p.197. they are steadily dying out). We thus obtain a maximum figure of 13 languages, including the frontier provinces, as the only ones that can be considered when we discuss administration.

In this connection we must also expose the absurdity of the legend that English is the *lingua franca* of India. After 150 years of English "education," only 1 per cent, can read and write English (2½ millions out of a population of 320 millions). The truth is that of the 13 Indian languages, the 9 North Indian languages are extremely closely allied, so that even the Census Report (1921, Vol.I, Part I, p.199) states: "There is no doubt that there is a common element in the main languages of Northern and Central India which renders their speakers *without any great conscious change in their speech mutually intelligible* to one another, and this common basis already forms an approach to a *lingua franca* over a large part of India".

There is another interesting point in the Simon Report to which we must draw attention. In India it is necessary for Imperialism to show the greatest possible diversity, but Imperialist policy has suddenly changed with regard to Burma. The interests of shipping and of heavy industry demand that Burma should be separated from India for more intensive exploitation, and the Report now says: "But though as many as 128 indigenous tongues are distinguished in the province, nearly seven-tenths of the whole population—and the proportion is growing—speak Burmese or a closely allied language". This is, quite rightly, cited as a proof of the linguistic unity of Burma. But although Hindustani is spoken or understood by seven-tenths of the Indian population, the fiction of 222 languages has to be maintained.

If we were to apply the same statistical method to Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany or the U.S.A., we could easily show that more than 200 languages are spoken in each of these countries.

The baseness and dishonesty of British Imperialist statistics have been made obvious even by a few facts cited above, and we trust that H.W. Nevinson will not "hold his peace" but will publicly confess that he has been misleading the British workers by repeating the Imperialist lie about the "222 separate languages".

In concluding this brief study of linguistic statistics, we must draw the attention of the Indian masses to the solution of the language problem by the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union. There are far more languages spoken in the vast territory of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, and yet the Russian workers have succeeded in establishing their strong independent centralised Government, while maintaining the fullest-possible cultural autonomy of the linguistic and national groups. The workers of India, too, will find no difficulty in solving their language problem when they have overthrown Imperialism, Feudalism and Capitalism, which are the real hindrances to their national unity and their full national emancipation.



# Appendix (xi)

## Editorial Note on India

*May Day, 1931—India and the World Situation—Imperialism's Triumph?—"Independence" in Chains—Exhaustion of Gandhism—India to New Paths—Cawnpore—Imperialism and Pogroms—Beyond Gandhism—New Stage—Driving Force of Mass Struggle—Agrarian Crisis—Towards Agrarian Revolution—Imperialism and Bourgeoisie Bankrupt—Aims of the National Bourgeoisie—Bourgeoisie and Mass Movement—Role of the Congress—Role of "Left Nationalism"—Future of Mass Struggle*

With May Day, 1931, the world economic crisis, which already dominated the situation of last May Day, continues unbroken, and is still extending its scope. All over the capitalist world, in Australia, in India, in South America, in the United States, in Europe, the masses of the population are finding themselves faced with worsening conditions and sharpening struggle. Political instability increases, both within each country, and in the world situation as a whole with the visible advance to war. Every attempt at partial combination or settlement of outstanding issues, such as the British-French-Italian Naval Agreement, or the Austro-German Union, hailed at the outset by the parties concerned as advances towards harmony, is revealed as only raising larger issues of antagonism and speedily becomes entangled in these complications. The bloc against the Soviet Union advances rapidly; but even here counterposing forces are revealed (parallel advance to closer Soviet-German economic relations). The advance to direct revolutionary crisis, which has already developed in the countries of South America, now extends to Europe in Spain and Portugal, and threatens in a series of further countries. Only in one direction does Capitalism claim to have achieved a success. That direction is India. Not only British Imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie, but the whole world bourgeoisie has acclaimed the "settlement" in India as a triumph of their order, a triumphant setback to the rising tide of revolt. Thus in his recent speech the leader of Fascism, Mussolini, signalled three outstanding events of the past months

as principal steps of advance towards stabilisation: the British-French-Italian Naval Agreement, the Austro-German Customs Union and—the Anglo-Indian settlement. With regard to the first two, their extremely uncertain and far from stabilising character has been already revealed. What of the third? Is there here a reversal of the general world tendency? Is the Indian struggle going downwards at the same time as the tempo of struggle is rising throughout the world? Or are the rejoicings of the bourgeoisie, as we shall have occasion to see, here also premature? *The question of the Indian struggle is not finished with the present "settlement"; it is likely to play a larger part than ever in the near future.* What is the outlook? There is no question more important, not only for the hundreds of millions in India, not only for the future in Britain and of the British Empire, but for the whole world situation. It is necessary, alongside the dominating war issue and the gathering struggle at home, to give special attention to the Indian question this May Day.

Does the present situation in India represent a triumph for Imperialism? On the face of it, there might appear plenty of grounds for saying so. Certainly the exaggerated clamour of the Churchill-Rothermere school about the British "surrender" and "loss" of India gives no ground for discounting the triumph; this is no more than the familiar howl of the millionaire over his "ruin" at the adding of sixpence to the income tax, when in fact the whole system of taxation is devised to maintain millionaires in safety. The handful of irate colonels of tradition may sincerely believe that Messrs. Baldwin and MacDonald are "crypto-revolutionary negrophiles", as they express it in their letters to the press; the politicians and journalists who exploit this agitation know very well that they are performing their part to strengthen the main line of Imperialism by this means, hardening the front against the possibility of any important concessions by magnifying the unimportant ones, assisting Gandhi and the Congress traitors to strut as heroes, assisting Baldwin and MacDonald and the Conservative-Labour butchers to strut as liberals, painting over the real blood-and-iron policy of Imperialism with a milk-and-water caricature, exalting the world-shaking significance of a settlement which changes

nothing, and in general glorifying the magnanimity of British self-sacrificing liberalism. All this thankless task is performed free of charge and ungrudgingly by the Die-Hards. It is always useful for Mr. Spencer, when driving a hard bargain, to have the legend of a bull-roaring Mr. Jorkins in the background.

But on any plain view of the facts, the settlement, so far as it goes, is a victory of British Imperialism without limit. Have not MacDonald and Baldwin accomplished their task of "saving India for the Empire"; have they not disarmed the Congress; have they not secured signatures to a settlement which leaves every strategic point in British hands and guarantees explicitly every point of British exploitation? Less than a year and a half ago the National Congress, claiming to represent the national struggle and holding in practice full effective leadership, proclaimed battle with British Imperialism, with the slogan of "complete independence" from British rule on their banners, and with solemn vows never to renounce the struggle untill the attainment of this goal. Millions entered the struggle; thousands have been killed; tens of thousands have been imprisoned; hundreds of thousands have undergone the violence of police and military brutality. And now the Congress have called off the struggle—for what? Not for a fraction of their previous professed aims; not for a fragment even of a strategic gain; but for permission to take part in a lickspittles' conference that they had sworn to boycott, and assist in elaborating the details of a constitution that is to serve as the new figleaf of autocracy, that enthrones every force of reaction and leaves every key of power in British hands.

Not only that, but the entire Congress machine is now engaged in coolly presenting this complete capitulation as the realisation of "complete independence". Even the heights of legal sophistry and theological casuistry, in which Gandhi and MacDonald are alike trained and at home, could hardly go further. Here is "Dominion status", here is "the pride and honour of responsible self-government" declares MacDonald of the Round-Table scheme. What after all is "Complete independence", asks Gandhi. And a suitable new definition is evolved. After all, it means simply "disciplined self-rule from within" (as the prisoner said, when

proving his “complete independence”; for of course “stone walls do not a prison make”; and “my mind to me a kingdom is”, as Alphonso said when condoled with on the loss of his kingdom; and the only “true revolution”, as we all know, is of “the heart”—(see Aunt Jemima’s *German Book of Political Wisecracks for Poor Saps*). Therefore it does not exclude “association with England” (“association” is good; it is delicate—especially when it means “association” with the sharp end of a bayonet). So is thrown overboard the definition of “complete independence” officially given from the chair at the Lahore Congress at the opening of the struggle, when the flag of independence was proudly unfurled—“complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism”, not excluding participation in “a larger group of which India could be an equal member”, but “the British Empire is not such a group”. For this independence the masses fought. What is the meaning of this turnover? It means not only that the aim, which in any case the Congress leaders never sincerely embraced, is abandoned. It means that the aim, the aim of independence which showed such power to arouse the enthusiasm and devotion of the masses, must never be allowed to be raised again: this, this slavery, is henceforth “independence”. *Gandhi and MacDonald combine to co-operate in a lie in order to bury the dangerous slogan for ever; they unite to deck slavery with a garland; they pour out liberally—it costs nothing—the phrases of “responsible self-government” and “complete independence” to describe a scheme which every one knows has as much to do with either as the position of a dog on a chain or a monkey on a stick.*

If this were all, if Gandhi and his associates and the Princes and the merchants and the landlords were India, then indeed the situation might be described as a full and unlimited victory of Imperialism; the Indian question would be “settled”, short of the detail haggling and bargaining to follow. But the situation is not so simple. That the Congress leadership, for all their flirtation with mass struggle (which they may still attempt to resume at some point, if in difficulties in the bargaining—even that is not excluded) would and could only end in such ignominious capitulation—that was already well-known and expected, that was already

demonstrated in 1922. *But 1931 is no longer 1922.* A vast gulf of development lies between. History is no mere succession of repetitions; rather, it is a successive unfolding of possibilities, in wave upon wave, and trying out of each in turn to the last and discarding upon failure, until the inevitable is reached. "You may kill Gandhi, but you will never kill Gandhism", declared this would-be saint with an accession of that feeling of godhead that has been visibly running to his unhappy brain since he has drunk the intoxication of mass-leadership, and that will leave him cold indeed when he finds himself thrown on one side, a shrivelled Kerensky. The exact opposite is the case. Here is no question or likelihood of anyone killing Gandhi, unless a government agent does it in the last resort, as in the flagpole incident, to save his reputation and make him a martyr. *But Gandhism—Gandhism is already dying; Gandhism has reached the full exhaustion of its possibilities.*

Gandhism, which all the petty-bourgeois fools in Europe and the United States who are ready to run after every Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Eddy, worshipped as the latest god-given word and key of power to civilisation's future, has revealed its ignominious failure before India's masses. has left them, after all their sacrifices and readiness to struggle, with all that sacrifice and struggle wasted, in as abject misery and degradation and bondage as at the outset, with the power of Imperialism unbroken and as merciless as ever, has abandoned them and made its peace with the imperialist enemy. All its bombastic promises of the outset are broken; all its asseverations of high purpose dissolve now into verbal quibblings; its religion is revealed as the sanctification of slavery; there remains only its inner core of servility to wealth and power, to the Viceroy, to the princes, to the rich merchants, who are all lost in admiration at the spiritual beauty of Gandhi and his doctrine. "Gandhi is not a nationalist leader; he is a leader of mankind." Who says this? Wedgwood Benn, executioner of Indian freedom, gaoler of sixty thousand, heroic bludgeoner of unarmed peasants, with the blood of thousands on his hands—he and such as he love and fawn on Gandhi and his Christly charm. But to all that is young and generous in India the name of Gandhi is and

object of cursing and contempt, the name of Judas. To them it is Baghat Singh, it is the prisoners of Meerut, the fighters against Imperialism who do not give up the fight, who fight to the death and know no peace with the enemy, that are the object of honour in India to day.

One thousand nine hundred and thirty-one is no longer 1922. The betrayal of 1922 was not followed at once by wholesale demonstrations of crowds of tens of thousands crying "Down with Gandhi!", "Gandhi the Traitor!", "Long Live the Revolution!"—while Gandhi is hastily moved with secret movements from place to place or hustled off in a motor car until he is safe again among his picked supporters. "The demonstrations against him in Bombay would have been a sheer impossibility a year ago" (Times, March 20, 1931). This is not a movement that is dying, that has had its death-blow from treachery; this is a movement that is going forward, that is learning, that will be stronger than ever for the clearing of the issues. 1922 was not followed, within three weeks of its "settlement" and calling off of the struggle, by the open revolt and advance to direct struggle, already far beyond the plane of Gandhism, of Cawnpore. The true facts of the Cawnpore battle have still to be revealed through the veil of censorship and martial law and imperialist lies. The imperialists try to present its bloodstained record as if it were nothing to do with any struggle for freedom, or with the flood of troops and guns that were hurled from every side into the city, but were solely a question of communal conflict. But even through their own records some of the facts creep.

Even in their censored accounts we read of attacks on the main Government buildings and offices, storming of the central telegraph offices, storming of the currency office, lawcourts, &c., as well as attacks on European cars (also perhaps a "communal conflict"?). Further, according to the official communiqué, the attacks on the Government offices began in the morning of March 24 (after 9 a.m.); it was not until the later afternoon (after 2 p.m.) that the communal troubles began, and then only with a pro-Government resistance of certain Moslem merchants to the hartal. The inference is clear. The movement began as a movement of mass

demonstration and struggle against British rule ; it was only several hours later, after it had already become serious, that, after the approved Tsarist fashion, the Government black-hundreds agents had done their work, and succeeded in diverting the struggle into communal channels of fratricidal strife. And indeed *the serious growth of Hindu-Moslem fighting reported from many parts of India to day is the strongest evidence that the tide of mass struggle is rising, and that the Government agents are at work in the regular fashion to turn it aside through these means, and turn it to self-destruction.* (To those who may still innocently think that the problem of Hindu-Moslem rioting is a problem of the existence of two communities and not a problem of British rule, we would put two questions: First, why have the Hindu-Moslem riots developed only under British rule, and increasingly under British rule? Second, why have the pogroms which were a similar feature of Tsarist Russia completely disappeared under Soviet rule?)

Cawnpore was already a signal and a symbol of the future. It was the spontaneous answer of the masses to Gandhi's treachery. It showed the way forward, even though still with inner weakness, to direct struggle, to struggle against the seats of Government, to seizure of power—the alternative to Gandhism which, once understood, will sweep the country and drive British rule from India. Even in the midst of Gandhism, Sholapur and Peshawar showed the path of the future. In contrast to 1921-22, the kernel of the movement of 1930 was already far removed from Gandhi; only the outer forms and official control lay in his hands, for lack of any developed alternative forms or organised leadership. The proletarian impetus, which is the decisive distinguishing feature that has developed between 1920 and 1930, although it has still not yet reached crystallised form in organisation and leadership, nevertheless visibly imparted its influence to the whole character of the struggle. Beneath the Gandhist shell, the movement took on the character, no longer primarily of the rehearsed pantomime of a handful of saintly satyagrahis courting arrest, but of active mass struggle, of aggressive struggle, even of direct conflicts and attempted seizure of power. The embryo of the future was already visible.

That the struggle will go forward, will go forward far more rapidly than after 1922, is certain. *But the moment is a critical one.* The alternative forms are still weak; the agents of Government are active; the masses are not sure of the path; the wave of mass struggle, if not given rapid direction and leadership, can be dispersed and dissipated in self-destructive paths. Never was there greater need for all serious anti-imperialist elements to come together and take stock of the whole position since the Pact and Karachi, to break through the old bonds and illusions, to rally the fight on a new basis and forge the new path forward. *Not mere denunciation of Gandhi, but definite break with the Congress, and active leadership of the new stage of mass struggle—that is the need today.* To assume that, because Gandhism is demonstrably exhausted the leadership of Gandhi is thereby finished, would-be self-deception. Gandhi will still play his role; nay, may even endeavour to play again with the idea of mass struggle, and by a few gestures to wipe out his treachery and win a new lease; and will not be thrust aside until such time as the action of the masses sweeps past him, until such time as a conscious alternative leadership confronts him, no longer as a fawning left wing by his side, but as an open enemy, as direct mass representatives, declaring war on imperialism and all its pro-British upper-class Indian supporters. The leadership of Gandhi is only finished when the opposition of Gandhi has passed from criticism to action, when the alternative mass-leadership holds the field in action.

What is the driving force to struggle in India to-day, that makes certain the carrying forward of the struggle? It is that *the masses can no longer continue to live under the conditions of the present slavery.* The world economic crisis, which has struck down by nearly half the world prices of the raw materials produced by the Indian peasantry, has only precipitated an already gathering crisis. The unspeakable misery of the overwhelming mass of the peasants, ground down under the combined yoke of Government tribute, feudal dues, landlords' rent, merchants' profits and money-lenders' usury, all of which buttress one another in a single system and unite to extract four-fifths of the meagre produce of his primitive and unequipped labour—this is no static condition of stagnant



misery. It is a driving, *dynamic* process of increasing misery, pauperisation, proletarianisation and drive to crisis—gathering with every year of British rule. All the signals are present of a gathering agrarian crisis, comparable to that which preceded the Revolution in Russia, and which preceded the Revolution in China.

Every investigation has borne evidence of this. (See, for a collection of some of the evidence, the article of H.P. Rathbone on "The Place of the Peasantry in the Indian Revolution" in *THE LABOUR MONTHLY* for July, 1930.)

The Indian Agricultural Commission, at the end of its investigations in 1927, had to report the reality of "agrarian deterioration". The growth in the agricultural proletariat or "landless labourers" from 7½ millions half a century ago to over 25 millions today is eloquent of the process of expropriation at work. Similarly every study of the size of holdings has shown the rapid process of impoverishment and the ever rising percentage with holdings too small to support life. Thus in Bombay the Commission found that 48 per cent of the farms were under 5 acres, and actually comprised only 2.4 per cent of the cultivated area. These are conditions pointing straight to revolution. Similarly, the health authorities report the steady worsening of conditions under imperialist rule. "The health authorities in Bengal", writes 'The Times' Calcutta correspondent (February 1, 1927) "assert that the inhabitants are not so well nourished today as they were a generation or so ago". Dr. C.A. Bentley, Director of Health for Bengal, stated in his report for 1927-28:

1,500,000 people are dying every year in Bengal alone. On an average 750,000 children under fifteen years of age die every year—about fifty per cent of the total deaths. Twenty-five per cent of the mortality is due to preventable diseases. *The present peasantry of Bengal are in a very large proportion taking to a dietary on which even rats could not live for more than five weeks.* Their vitality is now so undermined by inadequate diet they cannot stand the infection of foul diseases. Last year 120,000 people died of cholera ; 350,000 of malaria ; 350,000 from tuberculosis; 1,00,000 of enteric. On an average 55,000 new born infants die every year of tetanus.

*These are the conditions which no Irwin-Gandhi agreements can affect, but which can only be ended by the social revolution that will sweep away alike the imperialist exploiters and the reaction they artificially maintain, no less than the merchant-landlord domination represented by the Congress.*

To day even bourgeois and reformist observers are compelled to recognise the signs of approach to agrarian revolution in India. In March, 1929, Professor R. Mukerji of Calcutta University reported that the worsening condition of the peasants was pointing straight to agrarian revolution, and that, if energetic measures were not taken, catastrophe was inevitable (*Calcutta Forward*, March 17, 1929). In June, 1929, *The Times* pointed out in a special article (June 19, 1929) that the traditional picture of the passivity of the Indian peasantry was no longer true; the awakening has begun, and was showing itself on every side. In 1930, Brailsford, after his tour in India to help to save India for the Empire, brought back the conclusion: "My own feeling, as I left India in December, was that the next months might conceivably bring a widespread agrarian revolt" (article entitled "Towards a Peasant Rising" in the *New Leader*, February 28, 1931). So, too, the Calcutta Congress organ, *Liberty*, writes in December, 1930, of how "Hunger, the father of Revolution" stalks through the land; neither the Viceroy nor Gandhi can stop it; all the signs point to coming storm, alike in Bombay, in Bengal, in the Punjab, in the United Provinces.

But neither Imperialism nor the Indian bourgeoisie, who control the National Congress, can solve the problems of the agrarian crisis or avert the agrarian revolution. Imperialism is built for its social support on precisely the reactionary feudal landlord elements, whose interests it has to maintain as the condition of its own domination. Thus the Agricultural Commission was forbidden by its terms of reference from making any recommendations on land ownership, tenure, rents or Government land revenue—that is, from touching the roots of the problem. But the Indian bourgeoisie is equally tied up with the landlords; the class interests of both are closely interlocked; and the Congress has even in the height of the struggle exerted all its efforts to maintain the payment of rent to the landlords. Only the industrial proletariat growing up in the

towns, growing in consciousness and solidarity, and confronting in irreconcilable opposition the whole system of exploitation, can lead the struggle of the peasants in the common battle against the exploiters, for the conquest of the land and its wealth, for national and social liberation. This is the inevitable path *forward* in India.

The Masses in India have already shown their readiness to fight and to sacrifice. But they are not yet sure of the forms of struggle, of their organisation and leadership; and therefore they are still at the mercy of the national reformists of the bourgeoisie, who exploit them as cannon fodder. The Indian bourgeoisie still dominate, because they have still the monopoly of organisation and expression, and because they appear to proclaim the aims of national liberation. In fact their interests are hostile to the interests of the masses; their interests are to increase their share in the spoils of exploitation against the share of the imperialist exploiters. As Gandhi expressed it in his recent article on "The Giant and the Dwarf" in *Young India*:

In the administration of his country the Indian is generally a mere clerk. In business, he is at best a commission agent, getting hardly 5 per cent against his English principal's 95 per cent.

And he advocates a "levelling process" in order to reach "a state of equality". The commercial aim of bourgeois nationalism could not be more simply expressed. Five per cent and 95 per cent must give way to 50 per cent and 50 per cent. The flag of "independence", like the "liberty, equality and fraternity" of all bourgeois revolutions, is simply the flag to cover this commercial aim. It was typical that at the very outset of the 1930 struggle the nominal aim of independence was replaced by the Eleven Points, which were almost all trading points. *It was therefore inevitable, and no mere question of personal treachery that, as soon as the time came to do business, the question of independence is thrown in the background as a piece of stage finery, and attention is only concentrated on driving a bargain.* The fight between the national bourgeoisie and the imperialists is a fight for markets, for rights of exploitation. Five per cent must increase at the expense of 95 per cent, says Gandhi. "The market is open again", sings the *Daily Herald* in its editorial, "Good News", on the Irwin-Gandhi

Agreement; "it is up to British manufacturers to make good in the Indian market by quality and salesmanship. Let the manufacturers and merchants who will benefit by the new peace thank heaven for Mr. Benn and Lord Irwin." (March 6, 1931.)

If the national bourgeoisie could achieve their objective without having to bring the action of the masses into the question, none would be better pleased than they. But, like every bourgeoisie in its struggle for power, they are helpless without the masses. They tried already what they could accomplish on their own basis during the 1923-27 period of the Swaraj Party and its manoeuvrings in the Legislative Assembly, and appeals for a Round-Table Conference, during which time the Congress and mass civil disobedience was placed in cold storage. But the result was only to reveal their own impotence and the contempt of Imperialism. The appeals for a Round-Table Conference were brushed aside. The reply of imperialism was to appoint the Simon Commission without a pretence of a single Indian representative to soften the blow in the face of the Indian bourgeoisie. It was only then that the bourgeoisie was driven to court once more the rising mass movement, which was growing up independently of them, and threatening, with the giant spread of the proletarian struggle during 1927-29, to throw them in the background. Gandhi, who had been thrust aside for years, was brought to the front again as the sole line of contact with the masses. But even then the reluctance was extreme, because the danger of the weapon was known. Every attempt at an alternative, at a postponement, was tried, from the twelve-months postponing resolution of 1928 to the Delhi Manifesto embracing the Viceroy's declaration in the Autumn of 1929, to the Eleven points in substitution of independence in the beginning of 1930. Only the pressure of imperialism on the one side, and of the masses on the other, compelled the struggle. But the unfolding of the mass struggle rapidly affected the front of Imperialism. The Simon Commission was thrown overboard; the Round-Table Conference adopted; repeated appeals were thrown out to the Congress leaders. It was on the basis of the fear on both sides of the rising mass struggle that both sides came together in 1931.

It is thus clear that the essential political significance of the rôle of the national bourgeoisie, whose policy finds expression through the Congress in forms for popular propaganda, lies in its relation to the mass movement. Were the dominant bourgeois leaders who control the Congress simply to be regarded as agents of Imperialism, distorting and betraying a popular liberationist movement represented by the Congress, they would be far less dangerous; the question would then become simply a question of changing the leadership of the Congress, moving its policy to the "left", &c. *But this is not the case.* This would mean to mix up the flunkey type of Indian Liberals and the Congress leaders in a single rôle, when in fact they play distinct rôles for the bourgeoisie. *The strongest, dominant, most active bourgeois leaders are the Congress leaders, and not the direct Liberal agents of imperialism; and they are the strongest precisely because they are able to play on the support of the masses to strengthen their own position; and their instrument to accomplish this is the Congress.* National reformism, the limited oppositional rôle of the bourgeoisie, would be in itself a helpless and secondary political factor. It is only when national reformism dons a revolutionary cloak, and leads the mass movement in order to exploit it for its own purposes, and at the critical moment to behead it, that it becomes the direct principal menace to the national struggle for emancipation. The significance of the national bourgeois leadership is as *the disorganisers of the mass movement.* And the machine of that disorganisation is the National Congress.

For this reason the dreams of a "Left Nationalism", to be achieved through the Congress or in association with the Congress leadership (J. Nehru, Bose, &c.), are not only idle dreams: they are direct assistance of the national bourgeoisie in its rôle against the masses. For it is an essential part of this rôle that there must be a "Left" as well as a "Right"; there must be a "Left" to maintain the line of contact with the masses, to talk revolutionary language, to talk the language of youth, to talk socialist language, to hold out infinite promises even of a Workers' and Peasants' Republic, while the practical policy remains safe in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and, after exploiting the struggle of the masses for its

purposes, drives its resultant bargain with Imperialism. This was well revealed at Karachi. Nehru and Bose, after all their professions of opposition, finally accept the Pact with Imperialism—in return for what? In return for the passing of a so-called “Declaration of Rights”, a paper document of flowery promises of a new heaven and earth for the masses. But what is the use of this new paper document, when the old paper document of the fight for “independence” from the Empire has been torn in two. What matters is not the paper document, but precisely the practical policy of the Pact with imperialism. *The rôle of the “Left Nationalists” thus becomes a primary rôle in the task of deceiving and disorganising the masses.*

What is the position? The Round-Table Constitution, to which the Pact leads up (if the force of events does not smash the whole agreement before hand), represents the Supreme drawing together of all the forces of reaction, of privilege, of property against the masses. Under the ægis of Imperialism, the princes, the landlords, the merchants and the industrialists are to be brought closely together into a single structure; in which extreme reaction, represented by the princes, is to be given the overwhelming dominant position in the name of the “federal principle”, while the sham of elections is to be confined to the upper tenth of the population, and even so every strategic power, of finance, of military control, &c., is to be maintained in the untrammelled hands of imperialism. This is the grand idle of “responsible government” evolved by a Labour Government, by the Second International which claims to champion “democracy.” “One must suppose”, says the ever-trusting Brailsford, “that the Labour Party did this thing with its eyes closed.” Not at all. *This grand reunion of all the forces of reaction, of all the forces of “law and order”, this attempted reunion of Imperialism, Feudalism and the national bourgeoisie, is the measure of the growth and the menace of the rising mass struggle.* And from this the path forward is no less manifestly indicated. The new forces of mass struggle must find their forms and their leadership apart from and against all this. The closer the union of the whole camp of the exploiters, from the Viceroy to Left Nationalism, is drawn together by the driving force

of the mass struggle, the stronger grows the need and the opportunity for the mass struggle, of the workers and peasants, for the national revolutionary camp, to shake itself free and throw off all alien influences, to find its own line and leadership through the proletarian vanguard in the place of the bourgeoisie, and to carry forward the revolutionary struggle which will overthrow Imperialism and lead the way to social liberation. The treachery of the National Congress has opened the way for rapid advance in this direction in the new period of struggle now opening.

R. P. D.

## Appendix (xii)

### The New Imperialist Strategy in India

**Lester Hutchinson**

*[The following is a contribution by one of the released Meerut prisoners to the series of articles dealing with the National Government's new scheme for the enslavement of the Indian people. The first article in this series by Reginald Bridgeman (International Secretary, League Against Imperialism), was published last month.]*

A very correct and important estimate of the British ruling class is given by Stalin in the official report of his talk with Wells: Generally speaking, it must be said that of all the ruling classes, the ruling classes of England, both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, proved to be the cleverest, the most flexible from the point of view of their class interests, from the point of view of maintaining their power. ... In order to maintain their rule, the ruling classes of Great Britain have never forsworn small concessions, reforms. (*Stalin-Wells Talk. The New Statesman*, 6d.)

The cleverness and flexible strategy of the British ruling class has never been better illustrated than by the present proposals for Indian constitutional reform now before Parliament.

The Report of the Joint Committee and the proceedings in Parliament are remarkable in that they reveal the cynical frankness of the Imperialist majority, constantly breaking through the disguise of the usual hypocritical phraseology. Although the usual phrases are used, emphasis is no longer laid on the future benevolence and philanthropy of British rule in India, but on the necessity of holding India by any means and at any cost. It is, in the words of the Liberal, Foot, "not a question so much of India needing us. I think we need India."<sup>1</sup> And the new contempt for the old phrases was expressed by Major Attlee: "... the idea that Indians must always be ruled for their own good by the lonely white man is a late Victorian



sentiment..”<sup>2</sup> Instead it is made clear that constitutional reform is urgently necessary if Imperialism is going to preserve its hold of India. The necessity was expressed frankly by Baldwin to the Conservative Party at the Queen’s Hall on December 4 last. He then warned the opposition within the Imperialist camp that, unless this scheme of Indian constitutional reform was accepted, “we should lose India in two generations”. A grim warning to which Churchill, the leader of the diehard opposition to any concession being made to Indian Nationalism, could only reply by a gibe as to the exact measurement of a generation.

Baldwin’s statement is proof that the dominant Imperialist majority has a much firmer grasp of the realities of the Indian situation than the semi-fascist diehard group led by Churchill. The inflexible “No Surrender” policy of the Churchill group is the policy adopted by the Government of George III, which resulted in the loss of the American colonies; a lesson which Imperialism has not forgotten. The trusted agents of British finance-capital realise that Imperialism can only hope to prolong its rule in India, in face of the growing forces and difficulties which history is piling up against it, by remaining flexible; in order to survive it must adapt its machinery of Government from time to time to changing political and economic circumstances.

Constitutional reform is, therefore, the means by which an astute Imperialism carries out alterations and repairs to the machinery of Government, in order to bring that machinery up to date, so that it can deal more effectively with the growing strength of opposing forces. In this sense only, constitutional reform is an index to the growth of revolutionary forces.

Baldwin is also correct in stressing the danger to Imperialism of postponing the necessary alterations indefinitely. In the guarded language of Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, the proposals are made:

.....because we believe that the differences between Great Britain and India are not yet irreconcilable, but that, if we do not adjust our relations to modern conditions, those differences will drag us further and further apart. (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 60.)

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<sup>2</sup>*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 64

In other words, "if we do not adjust our administrative machinery and strengthen our hands to deal with new conditions, we shall be faced with open rebellion."

The same warning is to be found in the Government's reply to the Tory critics of the proposals, who are busy prophesying the same results in India, if the reforms are adopted, as those that have taken place in Ireland following "the sombre decision" of 1921. Both Mr. Baldwin and Captain Cazalet hastened to put them right. The latter shows that he understands the correct Imperialist strategy of constitutional reform:

The true analogy is not what happened in Ireland after the war, but what ought to have been done in regard to Ireland in the 'eighties. There was a time then when men of the Conservative and Liberal Parties and many people in Ireland were prepared to come to some agreement which would have been infinitely better and more honourable for all parties concerned than the ignominious surrender which we were driven to accept a few years after the war. (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p.122.)

It follows that Imperialism must not only be flexible, but must know when to be flexible.

In pursuing its strategy of constitutional reforms, Imperialism is not reforming the constitution of India in the interests of Indians, but is doing so only in the interests of Imperialism. It does not mean a constitutional advance of the Indian people; it means on the contrary new and stronger chains to keep them docile in the face of the continued and intensified exploitation of India by the agents of finance-capital.

The speeches in Parliament have made it clear that the new constitution is to be forced on India whether she likes it or not. Churchill, Wolmer, Page-Croft, and other critics belonging to the Imperialist right wing, scored one of their most impressive points in the Debate, by pointing out that all the Indian politicians who co-operated with the Joint Committee in framing the present proposals have been ignominiously defeated in the recent elections in India. The Government is so affected by this that Sir Samuel Hoare indulges in an important funeral oration:

.... is there a substantial body of public men in India who are prepared to work the Constitution? I am painfully aware of the fact that few, if any, Indian public men can say that they are satisfied with this or any other scheme. ...I know also that in the recent elections which took place for the Indian Assembly, Congress, upon a programme of hostility to these proposals, won very many seats. I know also that many of my Indian friends with whom I have worked during the last three or four years, have been defeated. They fell, let me say in passing, in the honourable cause of co-operation and reconciliation. (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p.57.)

Even the Princes, those remnants of feudalism maintained by British bayonets, afraid of any outside interference with their misrule, are suspicious of the scheme, and have had to be dragooned into acceptance by threats, promises and bribes. Major Courtauld informed the House of Commons that one Indian Prince had confided in him that he disliked the proposals, but had had to conceal his opinion for the following reasons:

You know, we are none of us infallible, and all of us may make mistakes in the administration of our States. If I agree with the Government's policy I am a good boy, and if I make a mistake not much notice will be taken of it, but if I now get up and say I disagree and make myself uncomfortable to them, then if I made a mistake my life would be made a burden to me. (*Hansard*, December 11, 1934, p. 290.)

Indeed, the position of the Princes under the new Constitution will be a curious one. The internal regime of the States will remain the same, and the laws of the Federation of which they are members will not run in the States. Yet inspite of this they will nominate 104 of the 260 members of the Federal Upper House, and 125 of the 375 members of the Federal Lower House. They are thus commiserated with on their position by Viscount Wolmer:

The position of the Indian Princes in the Federal Legislature is the most vulnerable in the whole scheme. They will be forced into the position of voting on issues which do not directly affect their States. They will be voting for taxes in budgets which their own subjects will not pay. How long do you think Congress and

Indian politicians are going to stand that ? ....do you think that Congress will hesitate to start an intensive agitation against the position of the Princes ? ...How long do you expect the Indian Princes to go on pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for you? [*Hansard* (Lords), December 10, 1934, p. 96.]

Although Imperialism persists, inspite of the strenuous opposition from within its own camp, in thrusting a new constitution on people who emphatically do not want it, it should not be thought that Imperialism will not obtain sufficient support in India to work the constitution. They will certainly get the support of Indian Capitalism and the landlord-money lender class; *but these classes will give their support not because they like the scheme, which falls far short of their expectations, but because they themselves being the immediate oppressors of the masses are forced to reply on Imperialism to protect them from the wrath of their victims.* The Indian National Congress will itself in practice work the constitution by its adoption of the programme of constitutional opposition.

It is not the purpose of this article to deal in detail with the actual proposals of the India Constitution Bill, which has already been done in the pages of the LABOUR MONTHLY and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> By the new constitution, Imperialism hopes to strengthen its political and economic hold on India, and to increase the autocratic powers of its agents, by masquerading as democracy. The new Indian Legislatures will be composed entirely of the representatives of Imperialist and Indian vested interests. There will be no direct election of the Federal Legislature, to which the members of the Provincial Legislatures, each community voting separately for its own candidates, will send their representatives. Franchise for the Provincial Legislatures will be extended only to those who posses high educational and property qualifications. Out of a population of 350,000,000, only 35,000,000 men and women will be entitled to vote. Thus Bengal with a population of 50,000,000 will only have a total electorate of 7,500,000. And this meagre

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3 Readers are referred for instance to a pamphlet just published by the League against Imperialism, entitled *India and a New Dictatorship*. B. Bradley and L. Hutchinson, 1d. Ed. LABOUR MONTHLY.

representation itself will be split up into separate electorates for the different communities, with seats reserved for specific vested interests. Even the Liberal sentiments of Mr. Foot were outraged after this system had been explained to him by Lord Salisbury, and he described it as "the negation of democracy"; and the position is so obvious that the champions of Labour in the House of Commons were forced to pay lip-service to the cause of the Indian masses. Major Attlee, for example, stated:

Let us suppose that we have this Constitution. What will be the position of the masses under it? We do not want to hand over the workers and peasants of India to the Princes, landlords, money lenders, industrialists and lawyers. I fear that is what we are doing. In the provinces there are second chambers in which vested interests are entrenched. They are pretty strong in the first chambers as well. At the Centre they are not only entrenched, but dug right in. (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p.70.)

But even the packed Legislatures cannot be guaranteed to function exclusively in the Imperialist interests; and therefore Imperialism has devised an all-embracing system of safeguards, reserved subjects, special responsibilities, which concentrates all real political power in the hands of a super-dictator, called the Governor-General, and absolute provincial dictators in the name of Governors, with the result that the whole conception of responsible Federal Government is turned into a mockery. And in addition Imperialism safeguards its financial dictatorship by the creation of the Indian Reserve Bank which, placed outside the sphere of legislative or ministerial control, will regulate and dominate the whole economic life of the country.

The whole scheme of safeguards has been so carefully worked out that even the diehard opposition has been forced to concede that the present proposals before Parliament are far more satisfactory to them than the previous proposals of the Government as published in the White Paper of 1933. In fact the only complaint of Lord Salisbury, one of its leaders, is that although the present proposals would "put India into a straight jacket,"<sup>4</sup> in practice the

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4. Queen's Hall Conservative Party Conference, December 4th, 1934.

straight jacket would turn out to be made of paper. Sir Samuel Hoare attempts to set his fears at rest:

No, Sir, these safeguards are not paper safeguards. They are safeguards with sanction behind them and with effective executive action to be put into effect if need arises. (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p.56.)

In spite, however, of these assurances, realistic enough as they are, the leaders of the Conservative right wing are not satisfied. They consider that any concession to Indian pressure and opinion, however slight it may be, necessarily weakens the Imperialist hold of India. Their spokesman, Churchill, derides the Government contention that the new reforms will strengthen the Imperialist Government:

Then we are told: "Alas, the Central Government is so weak. The poor, weak Central Government cannot continue as it is; we want a stronger Government." What do you mean by a stronger Government? ...Never was there a Government so strong as the existing Government of India. It is quite true that it does not use its strength, that it defers more than is desirable to the opinions of the unsatisfactory representative Legislative Assembly which has been gathered together at Delhi. (*Hansard*, December 12, 1934, p. 460.)

Here we have more than a glimpse of the alternative policy recommended by the Imperialist right wing. The existing Government in India is quite strong enough, *if only it would ignore Indian opinion and use its strength*. In short, the Conservative right wing demands "firm Government" by which it means full fascist dictatorship based even more openly than now on violence and terror, and carried on in the teeth of the opposition of every section of the population.

They make no secret of the form of Government they would like to see established in India. The Government plea that if it adopted the Churchill policy in India, it would be faced almost immediately with a mass rebellion, is treated with scorn by the pro-fascist diehards; and Sir Henry Page-Croft produces and reads to the startled House of Commons the following extract from an important document signed by the "eight greatest generals" who

have recently held commands in India:

We, the undersigned, having had considerable and recent military experience in India, state unhesitatingly that, from a military point of view, we can, at any time, hold India against external and internal dangers, provided we retain command of the land and sea communications and control of the police. (*Hansard*, December 11, 1934, p. 256.)

The very fact of the existence of such a document leaves little room for doubt of the attitude of the Imperialist right wing to the Indian question. Although the actual Indian policy of Imperialism is not as yet the policy of the Conservative right wing, the importance of the latter lies in the strength of its opposition. The Churchill-Salisbury-Lloyd group is the pace-maker of the Government's Indian policy. It is owing to its strenuous opposition that the Imperialist majority has inserted in the Constitution Bill several additional repressive safeguards to those that were originally published in the Government White Paper. As Palme Dutt has already pointed out, the near-fascist Conservative right wing is the driving force behind Imperialism's new Indian policy.

The Conservative right wing constitutes the only opposition in Parliament to the Government's Indian proposals. The empty and unreal character of the Labour Party's opposition was exposed by Baldwin, who, when replying to the debate, brought Lansbury to the verge of hysteria, by announcing that he only proposed to reply to "the real opposition.... from a number of my own supporters"<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, the position of the Labour opposition is decidedly ambiguous. It was under the Labour Government that the new Imperialist policy was initiated; representatives of the Labour Party participated in the Round Table Conferences, and sat on the Joint Committee; and although these representatives signed a minority report they did not disagree fundamentally with the findings of the Joint Committee. There is more than a little truth in Churchill's accusation that the Labour Party is responsible for the paternity of the present constitutional proposals. As he himself puts it:

Their paternity is proved without any doubt, and they are not going to escape the consequences by merely abusing the

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5. *Hansard*, December 12, 1934, p. 513.

wretched brat which has been foisted on the guileless Conservatives. (*Hansard*, December 12, 1934, p. 447.)

The position of the Labour Party is unenviable. Being now His Majesty's opposition, it is forced by the pressure of its rank and file to pretend to denounce its own offspring, in exactly the same manner as it has been forced to denounce the Prosecution at Meerut and the fierce repression of the 1930-31 civil disobedience movement for which it was itself responsible. Being unable to make any radical attack on its own offspring, it is forced to attack the Government for omitting in the present proposals the smug phrases of MacDonald and Sankey at the first Round Table Conference. The leaders of the Labour Party are rather conscious of their oppositional inadequacy; and Lansbury thus weakly tries to defend his party in the face of Churchill's contempt:

We shall not obstruct, and because we take that attitude the right Hon'ble Member for Epping has once or twice chivied us by saying, "You are not an Opposition; you do not fight the Government. It is we who fight the Government." (*Hansard*, December 12, 1934, p. 507.)

The whole position of the Labour Party on the Indian question is one of agreement on the main issues of the present proposed reforms; it agrees that these reforms are necessary if Imperialism is going to hold India; but it desires that the Imperialist objects should be cloaked in more palatable phraseology. It objects to the frankness which has crept into the present proposals. It rejoices when the present Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, jauntily declares himself to be "a lifelong Liberal and Home Ruler"<sup>6</sup>; but is annoyed when the Government at home does not take up the same attitude. The main complaint of the Labour Party leaders is that there is no mention in the Constitution Bill of the promotion of India in the far distant future to "dominion status". The whole position is put into a nutshell by the Labour spokesman, Attlee:

I wonder whether it is possible to think of a great nationalist movement going forward without something to inscribe on its

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *Hansard* (Lords), December 11, 1934, p. 253.



banners. If it does not have "Dominion Status" on its banners, perhaps it will have "Separation". (*Hansard*, December 10, 1934, p. 65.)

Or, in other words, if you want to keep the Indian people quiet in the new fetters you are preparing, give them something palatable and harmless to put on their banners.

It is a fatuous insult to the Indian masses. The mass movement in India, the movement of hungry peasants and sweated workers, which is growing stronger day by day, will not be content to compromise with Imperialism. They will not be content with the Labour Party's offer of dominion status; they will be satisfied with nothing less than complete independence for their country and complete emancipation for themselves. And while the agents of Imperialism in Britain and in India are squabbling over the new chains they are forging, they would do well to remember the words of Engels: "Their executioner waits at the door".

## Appendix (xiii)

### The Sixty-six per cent Background to the India Bill

Joan Beauchamp

*[The following article is a continuation of the series<sup>1</sup> which was commenced in January this year on the significance and background of the British Government's new plan to maintain its enslavement of the Indian peoples, as embodied in the Government of India Bill now being debated in Parliament. In this article Joan Beauchamp, author of "British Imperialism in India", recently published by Messrs. Martin Lawrence (5s.), describes the condition of the peasantry, the biggest section of the population, about to be vitally affected by the provisions of this new Bill. For, in the All-India Federal Legislature which this Bill creates, the princes and other sections of the landlord class are ensured a decisive if not predominating influence as the principal allies of British Imperialism. They will thus be guaranteed a share in the exploitation of the largest section of the Indian population, the vast majority of whom are denied all rights whatsoever under this constitution as shown by the fact that, except for the most insignificant proportion and that exclusively of the more wealthy sections, the whole peasant population remains completely disenfranchised.]*

An assiduous reading of the innumerable official reports on India which emanate from governmental or semi-governmental sources would lead one to believe that the solution of the problem of rural poverty was a herculean task which a little band of wholly

1. The previous articles in this series are "The New Deal in India," by Reginald Bridgeman, January, 1935 ; "The New Imperialist Strategy in India" by Lester Hutchinson, February, 1935. Copies of each of these issues can be obtained from the Manager, the LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, London, W.C.1, 7d. each post-free.

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disinterested Anglo-Indian officials was tackling day by day with enormous heroism, making a little headway here and there against the innate and indestructible ignorance and waywardness of the Indian peasant, and achieving a steady progress on which they were greatly to be congratulated.

As soon as one begins to study in any detail the Government of India's own official statistics this pretty picture fades away like the chimera it is, and one is amazed at the colossal hypocrisy of the compilers of the official reports who, knowing fully well the root causes of the poverty of the Indian peasant masses, write only of the minor effects arising from these causes, and speak cheerfully of improvements which exist only in their own imaginations.

These government reports tell glibly of sub-division of holdings, debt burdens, deterioration of cattle, lack of science, insufficiency of irrigation, and peasant ignorance. But they keep silent about the Government land monopoly, about the £25 million per annum which is taken from the cultivators by the Government alone, without counting the further vast sums absorbed by landlords and middlemen, about the scandalous rates of interest charged by moneylenders, about the heavy taxes on articles of consumption, the water charges and other local demands on the peasant economy.

The root cause of the ever-widening destitution of the Indian masses is to be found in the subjugation of India to the position of an agricultural colony under the control of British finance-capital. Under the strangle-hold of British Imperialism the industrial development of India has been so effectively held back that the census figures of the percentage of the population dependent on agriculture from 1891 to 1931 census, shows that 66 per cent of the population are now dependent on agriculture, as compared with 61 per cent in 1891. It is a fact that is not often realised that, in spite of the development of factory production during the war years (when Great Britain was no longer in a position to penalise Indian industry), the destruction of home industries was such that even the census figures of 1921 show a reduction, in the preceding decennial period, of the total number of workers in industry from 17.5 millions to 15.7 millions, which was further reduced by 1931 to 15.4 millions.

While the pressure on agriculture has been substantially increased the relative positions of the classes in the countryside have altered

as a result of the intensification of the exploitation of the peasant cultivator. The landlord class, that is to say, those who live on agricultural rent, without being themselves cultivators, has increased from 2.8 millions in 1911 to 3.3 millions in 1931. The number of cultivators, including owners and tenants decreased from 71 millions in 1911 to 61.2 millions in 1931, while the number of landless peasants increased by roughly 10 millions in the last decade.<sup>2</sup>

It is a favourite trick of the Anglo-Indian to talk as if the rate of increase of the Indian population was so great that the land and resources of India are insufficient adequately to support "the teeming millions" rapidly springing up. This, of course, is a deliberate misrepresentation. Not only do the census figures over the last fifty years show that the percentage rate of increase of the Indian population has been more than 10 per cent lower than that of the population of England and Wales, but the rate of increase in the decades 1901 and 1921 respectively sank to less than a half, and less than a quarter, of the lowest rate that has ever been known in this country.

That the land left over for the peasant cultivators, when the rapacity of the land monopolists has been satisfied, cannot yield them a subsistence leaves no room for doubt. The cultivated land in India is little over a third of the total area, but two-thirds of it is owned by the imperialists and landlords, while tens of millions of peasants have to subsist on the other third. The agricultural statistics show that nearly a quarter of the total area is "culturable but not cultivated," but in spite of this the cultivated area is not increasing at any appreciable rate, nor has the situation improved during the last ten years, as the following figures show:

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY  
(MILLION ACRES)

| Total Area     | Not Available for Cultivation | Forests | Fallow | Culturable Waste | Sown Area | Irrigated Area |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------|--------|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1922-23<br>667 | 152.0                         | 85.5    | 47.0   | 154              | 224.9     | 47.8           |
| 1932-33<br>667 | 145.0                         | 88.4    | 50.4   | 154              | 228.0     | 49.6           |

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2. Census figures.

These figures shows a stagnation in agriculture, and when one looks at them more closely and considers also those for 1931-32, a definitely retrograde tendency is seen. Comparing 1931-32 with the following year one finds that the same area, i.e., 34 per cent of the whole, is cultivated but in the latter year there was a 3 million acre reduction in the area sown to food crops. Also when one looks at the figures for rice, the staple food of the Indian masses, one finds not only a reduction in the acreage of last year's crop, but a very substantial reduction in the yield per acre as compared with 1922-23. The yield per acre of wheat also fell considerably during the same period. Of the 88 million acres of forest one-half belongs to the Government, while the rest is in the hands of the landlords and rich peasants, and the ordinary cultivator has to pay even for the use of such grazing as the forest lands afford for a short period of the year.

If the two hundred and seventy-eight million acres of cultivated and fallow lands were divided up equally among the landlords and peasants who live upon it, it would average at a little over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres per worker and landlord, but as many of the landlords possess more than 50 acres of cultivated land, it can be seen how small a proportion is left for each peasant. The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928) states :—

The Punjab figures which are the only ones available for a province indicate that 22.5 per cent of the cultivators cultivate one acre or less; a further 15.4 per cent cultivate between one and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres; 17.9 per cent between  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 acres and 20.5 between 5 and 10 acres. Except for Bombay, which would probably show a very similar result, and Burma which would give higher averages, all other provinces have much smaller areas per cultivator.

The agrarian crisis is rapidly worsening the already desperate condition of the Indian peasantry. The catastrophic fall in the prices of the peasants' products, while the goods of general consumption which he has to buy have remained comparatively stable in price, has brought him to a disastrous position. The Government, as usual, has shown its utter disregard of the welfare of the population by increasing the burden of the land revenue at the very moment when

the cultivator was least able to bear it. The result is that the cultivator is abandoned to the mercies of the moneylender, whose scandalous extortions have always been winked at by the Government.

Already in 1928 the Commission on Agriculture stated that:

to an extremely great extent the Indian agriculturist does not work for profit or for a net return, but for subsistence. The crowding of the people on the land, the lack of alternative means of security of living, the difficulty of finding any avenue of escape and the early age at which a man is burdened with dependants, combine to force the cultivator to grow food wherever he can and on whatever terms he can. Where his land has passed into the possession of his creditor, no legislation will serve his need, no tenancy law will protect him; for food he needs land, and for land he must plead before a creditor to whom he probably already owes more than the total value of the whole of his assets. That creditor is too often a landlord of a different class who has no historical connection with the estate, and is only interested in the immediate exploitation of the property in his control.

If this were true in 1928, how much more devastatingly true is it in 1935, when the bottom has dropped out of the agrarian market, the fall in prices has vastly increased the burden of rural indebtedness, and the land revenue is £3 million higher than it was before the slump. The better-off peasants have tried to stave off ruin by selling their gold and silver ornaments, and by this means more than 2,000 million rupees have been drained from India during the crisis. But the ordinary peasant is unable to stand the strain of usurious rent, taxes and interest, and millions of acres of land are passing from his hands to those of the money-lending shopkeepers and landlords.

The methods of the moneylenders are well-described as follows:

The most important group of moneylenders consists of the village shopkeepers, who deal with small cultivators. They are generally grocers, drapers, brokers and grain marchants, all rolled in one. They advance their goods and wares on credit to cultivators of their villages, and they also give cash loans. They generally accept the produce of the land in place of principal and interest. They have one way of calculating the value of the

produce given by the cultivators, and another way when they sell it to the cultivators. They credit them with a much lower price for the produce sold to them and debit them with a higher price for all goods bought from them by the cultivators. One of the settlement reports of a taluka in Surat district says :— "Food grain taken on credit has to be paid back 1½ maunds for every maund borrowed; for seeds, two maunds for every maund. Tobacco and such other articles are charged at 12 per cent above the market price; for example, a rupee's worth of tobacco is entered in the books as Rs.1.2.0"<sup>3</sup>

The vast majority of the Indian cultivators have to go on working year after year, hopelessly toiling for the creditors who have enslaved them, receiving out of their mortgaged harvest only the barest pittance to enable them to keep alive that the creditor may continue to wring profits out of their labour. These vampires are tacitly encouraged by the Government, and even the few laws to limit their extortions, which have been passed in response to popular clamour, are shamelessly admitted in Government publications to have fallen into disuse or to have been "completely ineffective".

Nevertheless, from the point of view of both British and Indian capitalists, the ruin and expropriation of the peasants is not good business—a beggar is not a profitable customer, and this obvious fact is beginning to be forced home to the Indian bourgeois as he sees his home market contract. The Annual Trade Report for the United Kingdom (1933-34), in accounting for the low level of exports to India, makes the following significant statement:— "The consuming capacity of the Indian people both in urban and rural districts, was at its lowest ebb and their purchases were confined to the barest necessities."

In its 1933 Report the Committee of the Bombay Millowners' Association says:

The main factor which adversely affected both yarn and cloth was the low purchasing power of the masses, who have suffered from successive crop failures, coupled with low prices.

In August, 1933, the Indian paper *Liberty* predicted that the time would soon come when the landlord would demand all that the cultivator grew, and nothing would remain with which to pay taxes or buy factory goods. It continued:

In Bengal we have apparently reached such a situation already. If a Bengal agriculturist still buys something, it is at the cost of the landlord and the *Mahajan*. He has no surplus of money, and this means that Bengal is at the threshold of economic collapse. (August 28, 1933)

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru told a representative of the United Press as long ago as September, 1933, that "the agrarian system has already collapsed and the new organisation of society is already inevitable".

But what are Jawaharlal Nehru and the rest of the Congress supporters doing to bring about "a new organisation of society"? Is the Village Industries scheme, which is supported by Congress, likely to bring about this new organisation, or is it calculated to sidetrack rural discontent into a harmless backwater? Gandhi, with his Village Industries movement, is fulfilling the prediction of Marx by performing the historical function of the lower middle-class—"they are reactionary, for they are trying to make the wheels of history turn backwards".

But there are revolutionary elements among the Indian peasant masses, ground down as they have been throughout the ages by foreign invaders, rapacious landlords and imperialists. A new agricultural proletariat is being built up out of the expropriated peasants, a proletariat inspired with the same spirit as that of the town proletariat, who are not so ignorant that they have not heard of the proletarian triumphs of Soviet Russia and Soviet China. The no-tax campaigns and the peasant rising against landlords and moneylenders which took place all over India in 1930-33 were put down by the Government with the greatest brutality, but the ever-increasing recurrence of similar "incidents" that the revolutionary ferment is working. In Madras, in August last, an incident, typical of many, was reported as follows:

Five persons were killed and five seriously injured when the police opened fire in self-defence on a riotous mob at Kithavadi,



near Pollachi, Madras. The police were assisting the holder of a decree order to take possession of a debtor's land. A mob, armed with spears and sticks, assembled to prevent the execution of the decree and attacked the police party. Police reinforcements were summoned, and the mob was dispersed. This situation is now under control, but the incident is regarded as grave.

It has always been said that the British ruling class was sufficiently clever and flexible in its methods to know when it had gone too far, and to draw back and make concessions in time. But is the Anglo-Indian type of exploiter quite as cunning? You cannot drive 60 million peasant cultivators to the verge of desperation without encountering incidents which may be "regarded as grave". The complacent language of the official reports in the face of the collapse of the whole agrarian system of India does not lead one to admire the intelligence of the Indian Government. They are perhaps banking unduly on the division of classes among the peasants, and their separation from the town proletariat. It will take time to forge a durable alliance between the industrial workers, the agricultural labourers and the lower ranks of the peasants, but the rapid breakdown of the agrarian system and the enslavement of the peasantry are destroying the last barriers to the union. When the peasants realise that they, as well as the industrial workers, have nothing to lose but their chains the day of reckoning will be at hand.

## Appendix (xiv)

### India's Fight Against The India Bill

**M. Muzaffar**

The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee's Report on Indian Constitutional "reforms" has been universally condemned in India. Not since the boycott of the Simon Commission has there been greater unanimity in India among the various political parties. The Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Liberal Federation, the Indian Merchants' Chamber, the Servants of India Society, and *all sections of the Labour Movement* have in no unmistakable terms condemned the Report and the India Bill which is based on that Report. *Only* the most reactionary feudal elements in India — the big landlords and the Princes do not look upon the India Bill in the same light. They, too, profess dissatisfaction with it, but that is because they want more safeguards and guarantees for themselves from the British Imperialists as the price of their support to an alien imperialism—at a time when ninety-nine per cent of the Indian people have expressed their strong disapproval of the new imperialist scheme, and when agrarian discontent in India is directly threatening the very existence of these antiquated parasites.

But while it is true that no single political organisation in India is satisfied with the India Bill, the opposition to the Bill and to Imperialism has not yet reached the stage when it can force Imperialism to take back this measure, or even to revise it. The very fact that the British Government can go on with insolent disregard of Indian public opinion pushing this retrogressive measure through Parliament, proves that they believe and hope that in spite of vocal opposition to the Bill, neither in India nor in England is

there any immediate prospect of a powerful pressure being brought to bear on them by the largest organised opposition parties which still have a hold over large sections of the masses — the Indian National Congress, and the British Labour Party

### **The New Tactics of the Congress**

At the last Annual Session of the Congress held at Bombay in November, 1934, the White Paper Scheme (which is the basis of the present Bill) was solemnly “rejected” by the Congress. But at the same session the Congress decided to participate in the elections to the Legislative Assembly, and abandon all “direct action” against Imperialist rule. This step was, of course, welcomed by British Imperialism; because even though they knew that the Congress leaders would not “fight” for India’s Independence except by “peaceful and legitimate means” as laid down in the Congress creed, still the experience of the last sixteen years clearly showed that mass movements led even by such people, had invariably developed into something more powerful and dangerous than what the Congress leaders or the Imperialists expected. The capture of Peshawar and Sholapur by the workers, the widespread peasant rebellions in all parts of the country, the mass strikes by the working-class and non-payment of taxes by the peasants — all these things Imperialism cannot afford to see repeated again in India. The economic situation is far too critical; and a revolutionary crisis might develop at any moment which might threaten the very foundations of the present regime in India. Not only the Imperialists, but the Congress leaders are also afraid of such developments. Hence, their complete abandonment of all activity tending towards mass action, and hence the fact that they have embraced constitutionalism with such fervour and enthusiasm. As to Gandhi, he professes to have given up politics altogether; he is begging the Imperialist Government to help him with his Village “Uplift” work, and indignant Congressmen in the Legislative Assembly have asked the Government what possible “harm” could there be in Government officials helping the Mahatma — now that he has openly declared that he will devote himself uniquely to “social work”!

The recent debate in the Legislative Assembly over the Joint Select Committee's Report very clearly shows the whole attitude of the Congress leaders towards the Indian struggle for independence. The following amendment was moved by Mr. Desai, the leader of the Congress Party in the Assembly:

This Assembly is of opinion that the proposed scheme of Constitution for the Government of India is conceived in a spirit of imperialist domination and economic exploitation and transfer of no real power to the people of India, and that the acceptance of such a Constitution will retard instead of furthering the political and economic progress of India, and recommends to the Governor-General in Council to advise His Majesty's Government not to proceed with any legislation based on the said scheme. (*Legislative Assembly Debates*, Feb., 1935).

But while our brave Congress leaders, comfortably sitting in the Assembly, talk about "imperialist domination and exploitation" — strong phrases to come out of the mouths of Congress leaders — one looks in vain in the speeches of these gentlemen for even a verbal declaration that they stand for the complete independence of India outside the British Empire, let alone as to how that independence is going to be achieved. They criticise the Report and want to reject it — but beyond that they do not want to go. No one with the slightest amount of common sense can believe that the British imperialists are going to be driven out of India by mere speeches in the Assembly — not even Dominion Status, not even partial demands can be conceded to us without mass-struggle — this has been the experience in India as well as the experience in all other countries wherever people have striven against political or social tyranny and exploitation. The astute Congress leaders know this as well as anybody else. So that when the logical question is put to them; what is the next step after the rejection of the India Bill by the Assembly; what is the further stage of the struggle against imperialism — and they in reply can profess only their utter helplessness to do anything — we know that this not only means the bankruptcy of their political leadership, but that it is a deliberate and conscious attempt on their part to retard, check, hinder and mislead the mass-struggle in India. Thus Mr. Desai concluded his speech by saying:

Even if we have not got power to compel the Government to grant what we desire or deserve we have certainly self-respect to repel what we do not want. (*Legislative Assembly Debates*, Feb. 1935).

The speeches of other leaders also end in the same hopeless strain: we are helpless against imperialism—so the only thing there is left for us to do is to console ourselves with the noble idea that we are preserving our “self-respect”. Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the Mohammedan nationalist leader, also ended his speech in the same strain:

We may be helpless, but our self-respect demands that we tell you that we do not want this scheme. (*Legislative Assembly Debates*, Feb. 1935).

Pandit G.B. Pant, Deputy Leader of the Congress Party, was pathetic in his confession. He appealed to the Government to realise:

That Congressmen as human beings would like to give up the life of sacrifices involving austerities . . . if they could find in the proposed scheme the hope of advance towards the goal the Congress had been working for. (*Legislative Assembly Debates*, Feb. 1935).

Mr. Shamlal, another Congress veteran from the Punjab, made the abject remark:

Even if we failed in the method of direct action the Congressmen will not compromise with evil. (*Legislative Assembly Debates*, Feb. 1935).

There is no wonder therefore that the Government spokesmen in the debate did not take the Congress speeches seriously. Sir Joseph Bore, a Member of the Viceroy's Council, characterised the Congress attitude towards the Bill as “*an empty meaningless and theatrical gesture*”. This impudent remark of an imperialist lackey was possible only because Congress leaders have abandoned *mass-struggle*; because they have no faith in the revolutionary actions of the Indian people; because they do not want to participate in the heroic struggle of the anti-imperialist fighters in India.

The Imperialist Government knows that in spite of their speeches rejecting the proposed scheme, the Congress leaders will work the “Reforms”. What is the alternative to the India Bill? Call a

Constituent Assembly, reply some of the Congress leaders. A Constituent Assembly, called by the British imperialists, which is going to frame a Constitution for India, involving the end of British rule! One has only to put the proposition in this way to realise how stupid and absurd it is. There is not the slightest doubt that Congress leaders know very well that the British Government is not going to hand over the reins of Government to them in such a simple and easy manner. If that was possible, if imperialism could be persuaded to destroy itself, India would have been free a long time ago. The only possible motive which the Congress leaders can have in using this slogan is to deceive and delude the masses which still follow them, into believing that they stand for freedom; that they are fighting for the liberation of our country from its imperialist yoke.

### **The Congress Socialists**

But what of the minority — the Congress Socialist Party? They have refused to participate in the elections to the Councils; they declare that they want to establish a Socialist State in India. Their leaders have even spoken about the necessity of a revolution. But what is their *method*? Do they fundamentally differ from their right-wing colleagues in the Congress? When the Working Committee of the Congress declared itself to be opposed to the idea of class-work and expressed its dissatisfaction with “loose talk” about it in the ranks of the Socialists, the Congress Socialist leaders issued a statement, wherein they said:

The symbol of faith of Congress in the achievement of Purna Swaraj, with the aid of legal and peaceful means. There is nothing in our programme which would in the least contradict this. We also want to win independence, and the very fact of our being in the Congress proves *the peaceful and legal means which we apply*. (My italics — M.M.) (*Bombay Chronicle*, Nov. 1934).

More recently when during the celebration of Independence Day on January 26 the Congress Working Committee proceeded to whittle down the original Declaration of Independence\*, which was couched in strong words to a mere pious affirmation in the cult of

\* This declaration was read out after the famous Independence resolution had been passed at the Lahore Congress in December, 1929.

"non-violence in thought, word and deed", the Socialists objected to the change. They said that the Congress should adhere to its creed of striving after Purna Swaraj by every peaceful and legitimate means, and not aspire to reach the higher spiritual level of the pure Gandhian cult.

This incident is characteristic of the whole attitude of the Congress Socialists towards the anti-imperialist question. They criticise the Congress leadership up to a point, but when it is a question of following a real revolutionary line of anti-imperialist struggle we find them; in effect, doing exactly the same as the Right-Wing of the Congress. The Congress Socialists want the "establishment of a Socialist Society", but not a Workers' and Peasants' Republic; they believe in class-war, but it is to be waged by "peaceful and legitimate means"; they are for "mass action", but not in "mass action culminating in a general strike and non-payment of taxes, rent and debt charges"—all this was made clear at the Second Session of their Party held last November at Bombay when revolutionary amendments were lost and the programme of the Socialist Party was finally passed.

### **The Class Character of the Congress**

It is necessary to analyse the character of the Congress in order to understand its present defeatist vacillating and contradictory attitude. While the majority of the rank and file of Congressmen belong to the lower middle-class, lawyers, doctors, students, journalists, artisans, sections of peasantry and town poor, the leadership of that organisation is in the hands of the upper bourgeoisie who control the whole Congress machinery. The interests of this class are opposed to the British capitalist class and it wants the monopoly of the Indian market for itself to the exclusion of the British competitor. But there are certain difficulties in the way. Firstly, in order to fight with British Imperialism this class, the Indian bourgeoisie, needs the support of the Indian masses: workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie; but they cannot rely on this support because the masses once roused might not remain under their control and thus threaten the existence both of Imperialism and of the Indian bourgeoisie. Secondly, the Indian bourgeoisie is, to a very

large extent, dependent on British finance capital, — so that it does not want a complete break from British Capitalism. And, thirdly, the Indian bourgeoisie is closely connected with the landed feudal elements in India—so that it hesitates to declare itself in favour of the total abolition of feudalism. The Congress has again and again assured the Princes and the landlords that it will stand by them in case they are threatened with the expropriation of their lands.

The Indian bourgeoisie has therefore to pursue a most difficult course. Fearing the imperialists above, and trembling at the prospect of a revolution from below, it has to manoeuvre always for a position in which it will *appear to be revolutionary*, and so be the leader of the national emancipatory movement; but as far as real mass actions are concerned it hesitates a thousand times before it takes a single step forward. And very often the step forward is followed by two steps backwards, because situations develop when its position is threatened from below — when the masses begin to show ominous signs of independent action and independent leadership. The whole history of the Indian National Congress, and most recently its attitude towards the India Bill, is a proof of this.

### **The Anti-Imperialist United Front**

The main problem, therefore, of the anti-imperialist struggle in India today is the regrouping of all the anti-imperialist elements under a new leadership — the leadership of a class whose interests, unlike those of the bourgeoisie, lie in carrying on a ceaseless struggle against imperialism until it is totally destroyed. This class is the working-class. And the working-class led by its Party, the Communist Party, can achieve this leadership only by correctly following the tactics of the united front. The rank and file Congressmen who are genuinely anti-imperialists; the Congress Socialists who are dissatisfied with the present leadership of the Congress; all those honest sections of the people who want to fight imperialism, but who are still in the ranks or under the influence of the Congress, are now standing at cross-roads—one leading towards Constitutionalism, reformism, inaction and defeat, the other towards mass action, revolution and victory—can be won over only if the revolutionaries in India, patiently and intelligently build up a



wide-spread anti-imperialist united front, keeping their party and identity intact and adding to its strength by proving to the masses *through action* the correctness of their programme and the sincerity of their purpose.

This is the only way in which the challenge of the India Bill can be met by India. This is the only way in which India can advance towards freedom from British rule. The indications are that such a united front is being built up; the great united front meeting on February the 7th in Bombay and similar meetings in all other parts of India; the move towards unity in the Trade Union Movement; the united front demonstrations against the banning of the Communist Party of India and other working-class organisations in Bombay and Calcutta; all these events show that the working-class is closing its ranks to meet the imperialist offensive.

*(Published in The Labour Monthly, London, May 1935 issue)*

## **Appendix (xv) a**

### **India and The War Danger**

Throughout the Capitalist World war preparations are proceeding with unprecedented rapidity. The world is on the verge of a new Imperialist War. In this race towards war British Imperialism is in the forefront. The National Government has decided to multiply the size of the British Air Force by three; the expenditure of an extra £10,000,000 on armaments; the piling up of amunitions; the whipping up of the patriotic fever by the militaristic Jubilee displays, are the open signs of how near we are to a war situation.

In Germany, Hitler repudiates the Versailles Treaty, introduces conscription and sets to work to rearm rapidly. All this is done with the acquiescence and support of British Imperialism. German Fascism openly declares its aggressive aims for expansion which are definitely directed against the Soviet Union. Along with these, the other Powers, particularly Japanese Imperialism, develops its offensive in the Far East. Behind all these open manifestations of the nearness of war, diplomatic intrigues, military alliances and relinement of forces are taking place. This terrific swing over from world talks about arms limitations to a frenzied arms race has taken place in a very short space of time.

The mass feeling of the working class throughout the world is opposed to these war preparations. Splendid mass demonstrations and protests have been witnessed in all capitalist countries. In India no less than in other countries, mass united opposition to war has shown itself in huge protest meetings of Congressmen, trade unionists and peasants, in Bombay, Calcutta and other places. The attitude of the mass of workers and peasants of India towards

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another Imperialist War has been made quite clear, but the attitude of the leadership of the Indian National Congress is different.

The class interests on this question were shown very clearly at the A.I.C.C. meeting which took place at Jabulpur towards the end of April. What may be considered as an amazing attitude for the people of a subject country to take on this question of War. The Congress Socialist Group moved the following resolution:

“That in view of the international situation and danger of the sudden outbreak of a war in which the British Empire may be involved, it is necessary for the Congress to declare its opposition to participation by India in any war in which the British Government may be involved, and undertake forthwith the preparation of the entire Indian Nation to resist actively the utilization of Indian men, money and resources for the purpose of such a war and utilise such a crisis for securing Swaraj.”

To the orthodox Congress leaders this resolution came as a bombshell, and when put to the vote was defeated, 19 voting for and 21 against it.

The reasons for this are quite clear. The growing mass revolt of the rank and file in India against the Congress leadership is making itself felt more and more. This desire of the masses of the workers and peasants for a more militant policy for a revolutionary policy is driving a section of the Congress leadership into the arms of British Imperialism. A section of the Congress leadership are favourably considering the question of even accepting office under the proposed new Constitution. They vote against the Anti-War resolution and many of the leadership who cannot agree with these proposals simply go into voluntary retirement. The orthodox Congress leaders and this includes Gandhi, are ready to accept office if they are elected to the Councils. All this is indicative of the radical changes which are taking place.

The terrific fear which has been engendered both in the minds of the Congress leadership and the Government by the great mass movement of workers and peasants is shown in the attitude of the Government on the one hand using every repressive measure to break the working class movement, and on the other by the Congress leadership in its move towards British Imperialism.

We can recall what happened during the War situation 1914-18, when the revolt against terrible economic conditions and foreign rule took on the form of comparatively small clashes in the Punjab, Bengal, N.W.F. and elsewhere. At the same time it is also possible to recall the role played by the Congress leadership, particularly Mr. Gandhi, who acted as the recruiting sergeant for British Imperialism, and was able to delude thousands of workers and peasants to sacrifice their lives for Imperialism.

The indications are that a new war will be much different. The indications are, the mass demonstrations of the rank and file of the Congress, the workers and peasants, against the War preparation. The vote of 19 in favour of the above resolution is another important indication that in the event of a new war the opposition will be on a very widespread scale. But to concretise and make effective the widespread feeling against war the Communists must mobilise the masses of workers and peasants on the broadest possible united front bases. Carefully organised Anti-War Conferences should be arranged throughout India, drawing in all trade unionists, workers and peasants, Congress socialists and Congress rank and file, all who are opposed to war and are prepared to utilise a war situation to further the struggle for National liberation.

Remember that one of the greatest things holding off war to-day is the fear of mass revolt in Capitalist and Colonial countries—this applies with particular force to India. Remember also the present war preparations are directed against the Soviet Union. That the powerful mass movement of the workers must be converted into a weapon in defence of the First Workers' Socialist Republic and for the liberation of India from the yoke of British Imperialism.

## Appendix (xv) b

### Indian Trade Union Unity

The most important result of the 14th session of the All-India Trade Union Congress was the achievement of unity of that body with the Red Trade Union Congress. This far-reaching agreement, reached on April 21st last, was preceded by a working arrangement arrived at the previous month between the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Federation of Trade Unions.

We welcome this agreement with satisfaction. At a time when the imperialist offensive against the working-class is intensified by the support of the reactionary forces in India, consolidated on the basis of the Constitution Bill, it is essential that the workers should heal all the breaches in their ranks which have for the last six years impaired the effect of their struggle on the economic and the political front. But it is essential that the Red Trade Union Congress should not allow itself to be saddled with the responsibility of the previous splits in working-class organisation. The President of the Congress, Harihernath Shestr<sup>\*</sup> tentatively threw out this suggestion in his opening address. He then stated that he found "a radical change in their (the Red T.U.C.) attitude towards Trade Union unity. They seem to have realised the futility of splitting the movement by creating a parallel organisational unity with other groups even though they may not agree with them politically. That is surely a happy change.....". The inference is clear : the responsibility for working-class disunity is to be placed on the shoulders of the Red T.U.C. Nothing can be further from

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<sup>\*</sup>Actual name is Hariharnath Shastri.

the truth. The original split took place at Nagpur in 1929, when the representatives of the Right—led by N.M. Joshi, Diwan Chimanlal, and others—refusing to abide by the majority decisions of the Congress broke away and founded the National Federation of Trade Unions “parallel organisational unity” initiated not by the revolutionaries but by the Right. The further split at Calcutta in 1931 was not the fault of the revolutionary element but of Subhas Chandra Bose, Raikar & Co., who forced the split to safeguard their own leadership and to cover up the treacherous role pursued in 1920—notably during the G.I.P. Railway Strike of 1930. All the splits that have taken place in the past six years have been caused by the fear of the Right-Wing of Communist penetration. Thus, if it comes to a question of apportioning blame, it must be made clear that the revolutionary leadership of the Trade Union Congress has held to a consistent revolutionary line which has led its enemies to seek protection in forming anti-revolutionary organisations for the purpose of excluding the working class from revolutionary influence and leadership.

But all that is now past history; the question is now of the future. Unity has been arrived at, and unity must, if it is at all possible, be preserved. The representatives of the Red T.U.C. are correct in insisting on the right of free propaganda and criticism, which has been agreed to by the All-India T.U.C. with the reservation that such freedom must be “consistent with the discipline of the A.I.T.U.C., without indulging in mutual recrimination.” The revolutionary section of the working-class movement must regard this reservation with suspicion. Its implication can be gathered from an editorial comment of the *Bombay Chronicle* in its issue of April 24th: “It is here (the question of freedom of criticism) that the executive of the A.I.T.U.C. will have to exercise continuous and very strict vigilance otherwise the unity achieved at Calcutta will end in disaster to the Movement”. What does this mean? The Executive must maintain “very strict vigilance” to prevent the revolutionary section infecting the working class movement with its revolutionary policy, which would, in the views of the Right, end in “disaster to the Movement.” This precautionary clause would

be the excuse for a further split, not from the Left but from the Right. It could mean, in effect, that the revolutionary section could be dominated by the Right, leaving the perpetual threat of a further split hanging over its head.

Such an interpretation cannot be accepted by the revolutionary trade-union organisations. They cannot agree to compromise on the question of a revolutionary policy. They must maintain the right of freedom of organisation, criticism and action, acting as the dynamic revolutionary force within the All-India Trade Union Congress. It should be clearly understood that Trade Union unity and united working-class action should not interfere with the most important task of building up a mass Communist Party of India, prepared to lead the worker and present masses in their struggle for bread and freedom and a Soviet India. On the political line there can be no compromise. Instead of being a hindrance, trade union unity should be the means of increasing the influence of the Communist Party among the masses, and should provide the opportunity to build up revolutionary centres in every centre of working-class activity and organisation, particularly within the National Federation of Trade Unions.

Yet with all the drawbacks and traps enforced by the reformist leadership, the importance of the step taken at Calcutta cannot be under-estimated. The Indian working-class is again organisationally united, and it is the duty of the revolutionary section, while maintaining its independence, to maintain this unity and to make it impossible for the reformist leadership to destroy it without expressing their anti-working-class character. The revolutionary section should participate in all joint actions of the working-class, using the same platform as the reformists to recruit more and more workers to the revolutionary policy which alone can result in ultimate victory. Minor provocations should not be held sufficient provocation to break this unity, as, for example, the mistake committed by the R.T.U.C. on the question of Workers' Week. The revolutionary section has gained an invaluable approach to the working-class mass, and it must be their task to gain the

confidence of the workers as maintainers of working-class unity, leaving the responsibility of all disruption to the reformists.

*(We have been requested to publish the following.— Ed.)*

Amritsar, Punjab,

9th May, 1935.

The following message has been sent to the King Emperor of India in London at the time of their Majesties Silver Jubilee on the 6th May, 1935, by the President *Patiala State Parja Mandal* (Patiala State People Association). Head Office, Amritsar, Punjab, (India), and copies to the Viceroy of India, Simla, Agent to the Governor-General Punjab States, Lahore and the Political Secretary to the Govt. of India, for information.

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“May it please Your Gracious Majesty,

THE Riasti Parja Mandal Patiala State prays for Your Majesty’s long life and blessed happiness on this auspicious occasion of Your Majesty’s Silver Jubilee.

The Mandal further respectfully begs Your Majesty to kindly consider the case of Sardar Sewa Singh Thikriwala—the recognised Patiala State Subject’s Leader who was done to death in Patiala Jail under very suspicious circumstances. Your Majesty may further be pleased to order an independent and impartial inquiry into the causes of his death also into the long standing complaints against the Patiala Ruler regarding the violation of chastity of women and other serious charges of atrocities committed generally in the Patiala State. By this act of justice and expression of true regards of your loyal and faithful subjects, sixteen lakhs inhabitants of Patiala will ever remain grateful to Your Majesty.

We have already approached the Indian Government and the authorities concerned in the matter; and in spite of repeated requests and expression of grievances—in press, on the platforms of and by various associations and public leaders no satisfactory step has as yet been taken.

In the end Praying on behalf of the Mandal for Your Majesty’s long life, happiness and prosperity.”



## Appendix (xv) c

### Problems of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India

There is no doubt whatever that India today stands at the cross roads. During the years of the crisis British Imperialism developed a desperate offensive against its colony, endeavouring to shift the burdens of its fresh difficulties on to the back of India. British Imperialism based its struggle for a way out of the crisis on intensifying its pressure upon the colonial and semi-colonial countries. It was precisely during the years of the crisis that it drained India of over two thousand million rupees in gold, as well as a vast quantity of depreciated raw material. During the years of the crisis the régime of military quartering and punitive expeditions was extremely intensified. Bombardment of whole districts from the air, shooting down street demonstrations in cities and towns, the persecution of the workers and rebellious starving peasants by the military and the police, acquired unprecedented dimensions.

The policy adhered to by the Indian National Congress, headed by the bloc of the national-reformist bourgeoisie and liberal landlords, proved to be a clearly unfit weapon for defending India against the attacks of British Imperialism. The Congress policy attempted to hamper and weaken these attacks, especially in view of the fact that they affected the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie; however, the duplicity and the conciliatory nature of this policy merely served to pave the way for fresh attacks of the imperialists. The ignominious end of the last civil disobedience campaign still further encouraged the hopes of the imperialist robbers that they would be easily able to suppress the national liberation movement

in India. Churchill, Baldwin and Co. could not have mocked so insolently at the impotence of the country, bound in chains, if Gandhi and Co. had not accompanied each and every one of their "opposition" gestures with constant assurances of readiness to come to terms with the enslavers of the country.

During the period of the crisis the conditions of the overwhelming majority of the Indian population, the condition of the workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie grew from bad to worse. And the worsening of the conditions of these strata cannot in any way be compared with the damage done to the Indian bourgeoisie and liberal landowners during this period. Alongside and in close interaction with the offensive of imperialism against enslaved and downtrodden India, the offensive of British and Indian capital developed against the standard of living of the workers, and the offensive of the landowners, usurers and semi-feudal village parasites against the toiling peasant masses. According to official data the wages of day workers in the textile mills decreased from 1926 to July, 1934, by 25.35 per cent. while the wages of pieceworkers decreased by 36.94 per cent. After the termination of the general textile workers' strike, wages were cut by another 7 per cent. Millions of acres of peasant land had been seized by the imperialists, landlords and usurers, who made haste to further enlarge their landed property at the expense of the pauperised and expropriated peasantry. The offensive of British Imperialism served as a basis and stimulus for the capitalists to attack the workers, for the landlords and usurers to attack the peasants.

### **Character of Struggle**

The extension and deepening of the mass struggle of the workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie against the imperialist robbers, against the landlord and usurers, against the attacks of capital, the development of new revolutionary forms of this struggle, were the direct results of the fact that the struggle against the colonial enslavers and local exploiters had, more than ever before, come to be a struggle for bread for the bulk of the toilers.

It was quite natural that under these circumstances the Indian National Congress came up against sharp and strong mass discontent, directed against its own capitulatory and conciliatory policy. Considerable sections of the working masses and broad strata of the urban petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, who had hitherto supported the policy of the National Congress and almost blindly fulfilled the instructions of the Congress leaders, realised how great was the discrepancy between the promises made by the Congress leaders and the actual state of affairs. During the years of the crisis the masses of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie went through a number of intense strike battles, violent peasant actions and uprisings, clashes and revolutionary demonstrations in the towns. The overwhelming majority of these masses, while not breaking contacts with the Congress, tried to beat back the attacks of the imperialists, landlords and capitalists. The very conditions of their struggle forced them to go beyond the limits of the Congress policy, which merely urged the application of "peaceful and lawful means." The workers had to strike in order to fight against the brutal wage cuts, against mass dismissals and starvation. The peasants, from whom the tax collectors, landlords and usurers began to take the harvest, together with their last belongings and their land, had to take the path of open struggle for their interests, against the foreign plunderers, against the landlords and usurers.

During the years of the crisis, British Imperialism came down upon the national liberation movement with unheard of repressions, filled up its filthy and evil-smelling prisons with tens of thousands of fighters, established in the country a régime of extreme arbitrariness and terror, even surpassing all that had previously existed in India. Simultaneously, under the influence of the crisis, the conditions of the urban petty bourgeoisie, of the small artisans, traders and intelligentsia radically worsened.

All of this facilitated the growth of discontent with the Congress policy among the broad strata of the petty bourgeoisie. This was why anti-imperialist activity began to acquire a more revolutionary and irreconcilable character.

**Political Groupings and Regroupings**

The masses who had faith in the Congress, expected that it would help them in their struggle, and would get them out of the impasse. It was precisely in this situation, under the pressure of the fierce attacks of imperialism, that the masses had to realise most keenly that they were doomed to failure and defeat because they were unorganised, because they had no militant leadership in their struggle. In their opinion their most burning and vital demands should become the programme for a struggle on a national scale. As a matter of fact, however, the Congress leaders not only made haste to hide in the rear, but directly tried to force on to the masses tactics inevitably leading to defeat.

The young Communist Party of India continues to make every effort to open the eyes of the masses of the people to the actual state of affairs. It carries to the masses the message of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. It exposes the double dealings and falsity of the national-reformist policy. It has consolidated and united the best sections of the advance workers—although far from the majority of them—having wrested them from under the treacherous influence of national-reformism. However, it has so far not succeeded in paralysing the influence of national-reformism among the masses, it has not so far succeeded in rallying and winning over the most active and militant sections of these masses to the side of the irreconcilable revolutionary struggle, it has not succeeded in wresting these masses from under the influence of the National Congress, in spite of a number of partial successes which it has won in this respect.

This is why the masses of the people in India today, having lost faith in the conciliatory policy of the National Congress, at the same time do not break away from this organisation, in a sense still looking upon the National Congress, headed by the national-reformist bourgeoisie and landlords, as an organisation representing an all-national opposition against imperialism. This is why these masses, while expressing their dissatisfaction with

the leadership of Gandhi and other capitulators and conciliators, while resenting the absence of democracy inside the Congress, simultaneously urge the National Congress to reorganise in line with their interests, demand that the Congress acknowledge their demands as its programme, that it help them organise for the struggle for these demands.

Considerable regroupings and changes are occurring at the present time in the upper strata of the National Congress. These regroupings and these changes show that the National Congress is not a consolidated and unified organisation of the national-reformist bourgeoisie and the national-reformist landlords. In a certain sense it represents an arena for political groupings and regroupings of the national-reformist bourgeoisie, of the liberal landlords and the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

### **Gandhi's Ultimatum Effect**

Gandhi submitted an ultimatum to the Congress, threatening to leave it. How did the various Congress groups and parties react to this?

The President of the Indian National Congress, Vallabh Patel, replied with the following statement to this ultimatum:

"Many of the Congressmen have lost faith in the present programme of the Congress. Some of them are anxious to try new methods. It would be in the interest of the nation to allow all such people a free hand to draw up their own programme and to work in their own way. It will be easier for Gandhi to work his own programme if he is relieved of the heavy burden of the Congress organisation, which is not likely to work smoothly unless radically altered. Outside the Congress, he will be more powerful and more helpful to the Congress. Inside, he would be a hindrance and a source of weakness to the Congress organisation."

Hence, even the closest adherents of Mahatma Gandhi politely show him the door, realising how far the differentiation had gone in the Congress camp.

The newly-formed Congress Socialist Party, with a respectful bow to Gandhi, simultaneously declares :

"The Socialists believe that the present drift to the Right in the Congress is bound to develop into barren reformism, which will ultimately liquidate the Indian National Congress as an organ of our people's struggle against imperialism and exploitation."

The bulky mass of the National Congress shows great instability, being shaken by pressure from below and by squabbles from above. Many of the differences and regroupings in the Congress are the result of the manoeuvres of British Imperialism, which tries to palm off its draft of an imperialist sham constitution for India, and are a consequence of the growth of the mass anti-imperialist, labour and peasant movement, of the fact that the general economic and agrarian crisis, as well as the offensive of British Imperialism, gave rise to important changes in the alignment of class forces. The Swaraj Party, defending participation in the provincial legislative councils and collaboration with British Imperialism, the Nationalist Party, disagreeing with Gandhi's compromise with the Moslem sections of the bourgeoisie and landlords, the Congress Socialist Party, organised with the aid of the younger Nehru and trying to win the sympathy of the oppressed and exploited masses by means of "Left" and sham socialist promises and phrases—such is the new bunch of Congress groupings, which more or less crystallise *as parties*.

### **Preparing for Further Betrayals**

Pressure is brought to bear on the Congress leaders from the Right, by those elements of the bourgeoisie and landlords who profited from the ruin of the peasants and from the offensive against the workers during the crisis, who got their crumbs from "empire co-operation" and who strive for more "friendly" relations with British capital. In consequence of the crisis a new stratum of bourgeois and bourgeois-landowning elements appeared, who are anxious to reinforce their position of new compradore middlemen between India and England. In turn, the representatives of Indian textile capital strive to come to terms with imperialism, even though within narrower limits, on the one hand, to be able to extend their legal possibilities for the struggle for the home market and for

defending their capitalist interests, and, on the other hand, for the struggle against the workers. The representatives of "left" national-reformism see how alarming the situation in the Congress is and understand that a too hasty bargain with imperialism might lead to very dangerous consequences. First of all, in such a bargain one might sell too cheap, one might cede too much to the opponent; secondly, such a bargain might greatly hasten the separation of the Congress leadership from the masses, who now stand at the cross roads. The growth of differences and clashes in the upper strata of the National Congress certainly helps to undermine the influence of national-reformism in the mass movement.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to think that such a situation in the ranks of the National Congress deprives it of the capacity to manoeuvre. On the contrary, precisely in connection with this situation, the Congress does its level best to weaken and paralyse the growing discontent in the midst of the masses by means of a number of cunning manoeuvres.

In reply to the charge of dictatorship from above and the violation of democracy inside the Congress, the Congress leaders organised open mass elections to the Provincial Congress Committee in Bombay, put up election tickets, rallied over fifteen thousand electors, and widely agitated for increasing individual membership. The Congress leaders are trying to show that the methods of leadership are undergoing a "radical change" and that the "victory of democracy" inside the Congress is assured.

Simultaneously, the Congress leaders launch among the masses the slogan of a constituent assembly which is to draw up a constitution for India. They thus try to imbue the masses with the idea that they are for a radical change in the existing state order, that the accusation that they advocate merely some petty reforms is absolutely unfounded. From their point of view the slogan of a constituent assembly is doubtlessly convenient in the sense that it makes it possible to distract the attention of the masses from the struggle against the draft of the sham constitution brought forward by Imperialist Britain. National reformism does its best to steer clear of all rocks, juggling and speculating with radical phrases. But in reality, all of this radicalism is not worth a brass farthing.

Even at the beginning of 1934 none other but Jawaharlal Nehru explained that the slogan of a constituent assembly must be equally acceptable for those who stand for the complete independence of India as well as for those who strive for a meagre autonomy under the heel of British domination.

The All-Indian Congress Socialist Party by its very formation demonstrates that Left national-reformism is obliged to have recourse to new and more cunning methods of action against the growing influence of the Communist Party among the masses. The Congress Socialist Party is generous in its promises to set up an "Indian Independent Socialist State," to "socialise the whole economy" and even to "collectivise agriculture." At the same time it promises to bring all this about BY MEANS OF THE OLD GANDHIST METHODS OF NON-VIOLENCE and the slogan of "Purna Swaraj". "Purna Swaraj" signifies an elastic screen for the bourgeois demand of a meagre autonomy within the framework of imperialist domination.

### **Tasks of the Communists**

The Congress politicians deal their blows at the weakest part of the mass movement, which cannot yet stand firmly on its own path of revolutionary struggle, which still lacks conscious political leadership and organisation. All of this taken together confronts the Communist Party of India with extremely responsible and serious tasks. Only by a thorough Marxist-Leninist analysis of the situation and the present correlation of class forces will enable the Party to avoid grave mistake and blunders. For a number of years the Party continued to wage a persistent irreconcilable struggle against national-reformism and its "left" agencies. It fought against the Kandalkars, Ruikars and Roys, determinedly offsetting the treacherous policy of the national-reformists by its own political line.

In colonial countries the vanguard of the working-class cannot constitute itself and take form as a Communist Party without a constant and relentless struggle being carried on for winning over the masses, and, first and foremost, for wresting the masses of the working-class from under the influence



of national reformism, which binds the masses of the people hand and foot in their struggle against imperialism and which serves as the ideology and political weapon of the bourgeoisie.

However, the Communist Party of India in the past committed a number of mistakes and incorrect actions as regards its participation in the anti-imperialist struggle. This could be especially felt at the crucial moment in 1930. New masses got into motion, bringing with them a vast amount of petty bourgeois prejudices and unthinking patriarchal trustfulness towards the bourgeoisie. But they awoke to participation in the anti-imperialist struggle. The task of the Communists was not to limit themselves simply to general appeals to fight for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution, but to go into the midst of the struggling masses, to try and rally them to their side, giving chief prominence to the concrete demands of the struggle against imperialism and putting the tactics of the united front into effect. In reality the result was the separation OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST NATIONAL REFORMISM FROM THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM FROM THE STRUGGLE FOR THE IMMEDIATE DEMANDS OF THE WORKERS AS WELL AS OF THE PEASANTS. This greatly hampered and weakened the work of the Communists among the workers, who were under national-reformist influence, weakened the work in the reformist unions. The inability to link up the most active participation in the struggle against imperialism in the front ranks of the fighting masses with the exposure of national reformism, facilitated the growth of sectarian moods and tendencies, which even today are far from being overcome.

### **Tactics of United Front**

The waging of the general textile workers strike in 1934 showed that the Communist Party and adherents of the revolutionary trade union movement were able to find the right path towards the conducting of united front tactics. Without this the very strike would have been impossible, without this the organisation of the strike committee would have fallen into the hands of

representatives of the treacherous national-reformists. The strike opened a new page in the history of the struggle of the Indian working-class against imperialism and against its own bourgeoisie.

However, the weakening of the ranks of the Communist Party and the adherents of the left trade unions through numerous arrests led to the fact that during the second period of the strike a number of gross mistakes were made and some of the left leaders of the workers went so far as to proclaim the necessity of organising purely Communist Trade Unions. Secretarian blindness found its expression in numerous attempts to heap into one pile the treacherous national-reformist trade union leaders and the masses of workers following them and being misled by them.

*Unless the sickness of sectarianism is immediately overcome in a determined way, the Communist Party will not be able to extend its influence over the masses, will not be able to lead the masses of workers, peasants and toilers of the town who are becoming revolutionised, to higher revolutionary forms of action.*

The application of the tactics of the UNITED FRONT in the anti-imperialist struggle, as well as in the struggle of the workers against the capitalist offensive, in the struggle of the peasants against the landlords and usurers, is the basic condition for a successful struggle for the masses. The tactics of the united front in the struggle against imperialism must be based on the real relationship of forces in the mass movement. The tactics of the united front in the struggle against imperialism must be based on the rallying of the broad masses to this struggle, the masses who are still far from having rid themselves of national-reformist illusions, but who sincerely and honestly desire to fight against imperialism, despite and against the advice and instructions that they get from their faithless leaders. The Communist Party cannot isolate itself from the mass-struggle. This becomes all the more dangerous since imperialism outlawed the Communist Party, since national-reformism savagely villifies it, since the agents of the bourgeoisie in the working-class, the Kandalkars, the Roys and Socialists, call for the "purging" of the labour

movement of all Communists.

### **A Minimum Programme**

The Communist Party must take advantage of the present situation in the camp of the National Congress in order to actively and persistently mobilise the masses for the struggle against the imperialist offensive. It cannot renounce the struggle for those masses who come within the framework of the National Congress. Of course the path of the Communist Party of India radically differs from the path of the National Congress and the National Congress is not even such a wide organisation of the anti-imperialist front as the Kuomintang had been before it went over to the camp of the bourgeois-landlord counter-revolution. As a party, as the organisation of the vanguard of the working-class, the Communist Party of India always and everywhere carries on a merciless struggle against the imperialist oppressors as well as against bourgeois national-reformist conciliation. But there are in India a number of trade unions, a number of anti-imperialist organisations, organisations of the Left Youth, which, taking a more or less unconciliatory attitude towards national-reformism, could play the part of the centre of attraction for the masses, who demand a real, effective struggle for the independence of the country against the imperialist oppressors. There are a number of organisations in India which include also Communists, which could develop their work among the masses to counter-balance national-reformism. These larger organisations could become the centre for intensifying and developing an effective struggle against imperialism.

The whole situation bears witness to the fact that the power and influence of these organisations will grow infinitely more if, as organisations, they join the local organisations of the Congress, *on the basis of collective membership, while preserving their independence and face*. Their affiliation to the Congress organisations is dictated by the necessity of seriously and widely developing the anti-imperialist struggle. After joining the Congress they can take up the task of uniting all honest elements, ready to

fight against imperialism not in Gandhi fashion, but in actual deed. A minimum programme of the united front for the anti-imperialist struggle for uniting and activising all such elements may be the following:

1. *Complete and unconditional independence of India from Britain.*

2. *Repeal of all emergency laws (not only the ordinances), and all anti-labour laws. The liberation of all political prisoners.*

3. *Refusal to participate in legislative councils and the cessation of all negotiations with British Imperialism.*

4. *Organisation of the struggle of the masses against imperialism and against the imperialist sham constitution.*

5. *Against wage cuts and dismissals of workers, against the seizure of peasant land for debt by the imperialist, landlords and usurers.*

There are wide strata in the ranks of the National Congress who are prepared *to fight* for such a programme. However, such strata, policy of deceit and swindling must be opposed by the policy of rallying together all honest anti-imperialist elements.

There are wide strata in the ranks of the National Congress who are prepared *to fight* for such a programme. However, such strata, representing the dissatisfied masses, lack organisation and political stability. The powerful wave of strike struggles, revolutionary demonstrations and peasant uprisings, which spread over the whole of India during the years of the crisis, taught the masses a great deal. The masses of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie are marking, learning and inwardly digesting the lessons of the struggle and the lessons taught by the bankruptcy of conciliation tactics. It is necessary to help these masses to draw the correct *political* conclusions, to help them to *organise* into an independent political force.

### **Bargaining with British Imperialism**

Let the Congress leaders not shout that the crafty Communists are intriguing against the "national organisation of struggle against imperialism." Within the limits of the National Congress, Gandhi,

the Swarajists, the Nationalists have their hands absolutely free to carry on shameful bartering and strike bargains with British Imperialism, behind the scenes. Many of them openly declare that a constituent assembly should be convened at the time when there are chances of calling a new Round Table Conference in London. Subhas Bose, begging a help from Italian Fascism for Indian national-reformism, recently wrote:—

“The immediate problem is to transform the Indian National Congress into an organ of masses of India. .... I disagree with the Communist when they allege that the Congress is essentially a bourgeois institution and is incapable of transformation. To alter the present composition of the Congress, however, we shall have to bring into our fold the three radical groups in the country—youths, workers and peasants—and give them adequate representation.”

The Congress leaders have no objection to rallying the youth, workers and peasants to their side, to be obedient cattle which will vote submissively for all their decisions. But precisely this policy of deceit and swindling must be opposed by the policy of rallying together all honest anti-imperialist elements.

During the period of reaction which set in after the suppression of the first Russian revolution and, also later, right up to 1917, the Bolsheviks utilised all legal possibilities for extending and strengthening the influence of the proletarian party, for extending and strengthening its contacts with the masses. Representatives of Left trade unions and working-class educational societies took part in bourgeois and bourgeois-landlords congresses, which were called from time to time, now for discussing problems of the struggle against alcoholism, now for discussing questions of medical safeguarding in factories, the situation in the various handicrafts or the struggle against prostitution. At these legal congresses these representatives always did find proper forms for coming out and defending uncompromising proletarian viewpoints.

India is a colony. In a colony which is downtrodden by the iron heel of an imperialist dictatorship, the scope of legal possibilities is extremely limited. British Imperialism tries to deprive the Indian

*workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie of the few miserable vestiges of legality they now have. On the other hand, British Imperialism now, more indirectly than directly, gives to the Indian national-reformist bourgeoisie and landlords a certain legal field of action so that they should utilise this legality in the struggle for influence over the masses. The National Congress presents not only a certain field for legal activity (although limited to the extreme by the barriers of British "legality"); it presents also a political arena in which the different groupings of the Indian exploiting classes take a definite form. The representatives of these classes are naturally keen on not letting their internal differences become public knowledge, in order that these differences should not be used by the exploited and oppressed masses in their own interests. But precisely for this reason it is necessary that organisations which really represent the workers, peasants and petty bourgeois youth utilise this arena in their own interests.*

### **A Motley Coalition**

The group of the renegade Roy always preached and still preaches the "great information of the Congress from below," its transformation into an organ of the masses—according to the recipe of Bose & Co. The separation of parties in the upper strata of the Congress shows what a motley coalition the National Congress is. The adherents of Roy, falsely professing to regard the interests of the Communist movement, desired and still desire to make the proletarian vanguard subordinate to the diffuse conciliatory block of the national-reformist bourgeoisie and leading ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. We don't take this way !

The Left organisations of workers, students and peasants, after having decided to join the Congress organisations on the basis of collective membership, will go there not for masquerading and unprincipled conciliation, but for really extending and deepening the struggle against imperialist oppression, for exposing the tricksters of national-reformism. By putting up their minimum platform for the anti-imperialist struggle, they will by no means tie their hands. The representatives of these organisations will have

to be able, and will be able to utilise the meetings of the Congress organisations not only for agitating for the minimum platform of the united front, but also for explaining and defending the complete, undeleted programme of the anti-imperialist and agrarian peasant revolution under the leadership of the working-class. They will be able to find the necessary words for exposing every single fact of imperialist violence and mockery. They will be able to find a common tongue with the masses of the people in every action, whether it be against wage curts, or against the robbery of the peasants by the landlords and the usurers. They will be able to draw the necessary practical and effective conclusions in the sense of mobilising the masses against every separate fact of imperialist violence, against each and every anti-labour law, against every separate act of violence of the semi-feudal exploiters in the village.

### **Responsibility of the Communist Party**

There is no doubt whatsoever that work in the ranks of the Congress organisations contains dangers insofar as certain unstable elements of the Left mass movement and even individual unstable Communists, who, being in the ranks of the Left organisations, joined the Congress organisations, may slip down on to the road of conciliation with national-reformism and may wrongly interpret the tactics of the united front as meaning the renunciation of the irreconcilable struggle against the national-reformist conciliators. Such distorted and liquidatory interpretation of the absolutely necessary tactics of the united front must be determinedly fought against. The Communist Party must see to it that it explains its line of conduct correctly, in a real Bolshevik fashion. It must exercise a genuine check-up on the actions of its members; it must give proper leadership to the organisations which, on the basis of collective leadership, joined the Congress.

At the same time the Communist Party as such will develop outside the Congress organisations a wide independent mobilisation of the masses for the struggle against imperialism, and will consistently put into effect the tactics of the united front when organising any anti-imperialist action. *Its struggles against*

*national-reformism*, in close and inseparable contact with the mobilisation of the masses against the principal enemy, against imperialism, must not be weakened down, even a moment, when applying the above tactics, but on the contrary, *will have to be deepened and widened*. This struggle against national-reformism will have to be based much more than hitherto on the *concrete* exposure of every national-reformist manoeuvre, on the concrete exposure of individual national-reformist leaders, on explaining their actual role and intentions, on advancing concrete proposals for the struggle against imperialism, as against the conciliatory manoeuvres.

Naturally, the Indian Communists must give due consideration to the specific features of the concrete situation. They must thoroughly discuss and solve all problems connected with the application of the tactics of the united front in the anti-imperialist struggle at the present stage. They must have the final word in this respect. But simultaneously there is no doubt that the Communist Party of India must take into consideration the fact that after a long period of struggles against national-reformism, for the organisation of the proletarian vanguard, it has to be confronted closely by the whole course of events with the task of winning over the masses to the side of the revolution through the tactics of the united front.

The glorious Communist Party of China, which has 150,000 members in its ranks, grew into a great force because it succeeded in linking up the bold development of the anti-imperialist struggle with the strike action of the working-class, with the struggle of the peasants for land. The Communist Party of China was able from the very outset to link up the struggle against imperialism inseparably into one with the struggle of the workers against capital, with the struggle of the peasants against their feudal oppressors.

There is no other party in India, besides the Communist Party, which could consolidate and lead the masses of the people to decisive battles for the independence of the country, for the agrarian peasant revolution, for the Soviets. Objective conditions are very favourable for the Communist Party of India, and therefore, it is charged with great political responsibility. At this crucial



moment it must not give the conciliators of national-reformism the possibility to triumph again over the deceived masses; it must not let itself be isolated from the masses. It must throw itself into the thick of the masses under its militant banner; it must learn in Bolshevist fashion how to rally and consolidate the masses, who still stand at the cross-roads between the revolutionary struggle and the impasse of national-reformism conciliation.

# Appendix (xv) d

## India and the British Working class

Lester Hutchinson

### I

One of the greatest obstacles to world revolution is the lack of unity between the workers in the imperialist countries and the colonial workers and peasants. Without this essential unity the class-struggle becomes unduly localised, while Imperialism profits from the division in the ranks of its class enemy.

These antagonisms are the product of successful imperialist exploitation in the past, and are kept alive today by a hundred and one devices of capitalism: subtle propaganda in the reptile press and on the platform, and by the imperialist monopoly of primary education. But all these capitalist devices would be unavailing were they not supported by the pro-imperialist policy of the official Labour Party and the Trade Union bureaucracy.

The policy of dividing the working class is an old one of capitalism. Marx, in a letter dated April 9, 1870, showed the advantages reaped by capitalism from these artificially stimulated antagonisms between the British and the colonial workers:

“.....every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class population *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*..... The Irishman.....regards the English worker as both sharing in

the guilt of the English domination over Ireland and at the same time serving as its stupid tool. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. It is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite their organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And of this that class is well aware."

The same antagonism exists between large sections of the British and colonial workers of to-day, having exactly the same cause and effect. The British worker is taught that his bad conditions, low wages, unemployment, short time and general misery are directly due to the competition of cheap labour in India and Japan; he is taught to hate the Indian worker as one who is taking the bread from his mouth; he is taught—and here lies the inestimable value of the system of compulsory education—that he is a member of the ruling race; he is taught that the "native" is sly, treacherous, servile, murderous and altogether inferior; and he is taught to console himself while he stands in the queue at the Labour Exchange that although suffering from cold and hunger he is the part owner of nearly a third of the world. And lest his reason should revolt, he is further sandbagged by the official Labour Party propaganda. He is told that a Socialist Government—save the mark—could not "give" freedom to the colonial peoples at once, for if it did so the whole economic system of Britain would collapse, and the working class plunged into the depths of evil and misery. Instead he is informed that a Socialist Government, inheriting the divine civilising mission of imperialism, would manfully shoulder the white man's burden and gradually educate the colonial peoples towards freedom within "the Commonwealth"; there would be a danger otherwise that the wanton natives if given their independence might prefer out of sheer malice to eat their raw materials instead of exporting them for the benefit of British "Socialism"; and so on, in an endless farrago of the most hypocritical and nauseating form of Imperialism masquerading as Socialism.

On the other hand, in India the British working class is regarded as partly guilty for the long oppression and exploitation of India. And it must be confessed that India has had until recently very little opportunity of drawing a distinction as far as the exploitation of India is concerned between the British capitalist and the British worker. For India the word British alone, irrespective of class, signifies oppression. The Indian believes that the British worker distinguishes between British Capitalism in Britain and British Capitalism in India; the former to be fought and the latter to be supported. Nor is this impression removed by the shameful record of the two Labour Governments, which, in the name of the British working class, shot, bludgeoned and imprisoned the Indian workers and peasants with a rabid virulence hardly equalled by the worst efforts of the previous and succeeding Tory administrations. Nor has India forgotten that, the new slave constitution for India is the illegitimate child of the Labour Government, now adopted because of its looks by the Conservatives.

In this manner Imperialism fulfils its traditional policy of "divide and rule." It not only promotes dissensions between Hindus and Moslems, but what is much more important it drives a wedge firmly between the British working class and the colonial masses. It is one of the most fundamental tasks of the revolutionary movement to withdraw this wedge, to bring about the unity in action between the British and colonial workers against their common enemy. To accomplish this it is necessary to expose lucidly and simply to the British workers the lies, slanders and manoeuvres of capitalism, which by exploiting the colonial workers keeps them also in subjection; it is necessary for the British workers to repudiate indignantly and categorically the so-called "colonial policy" of the official Labour Party, and thus wipe out the stain on the revolutionary honour of the British working class imposed by the Labour Government; and it is necessary to win the confidence of the Indian masses by recognising their right to independence, and by uniting the two fronts of the revolutionary class-struggle in an uncompromising fight against Imperialism.

## II

It is important to recognise that in the period of imperialist prosperity the British working class shared to a degree in the profits of the exploitation of the colonies. It was then the most comfortable working class and therefore, the most backward. In 1882 Engels wrote to Kautsky:

"You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general: the same as what the bourgeois thinks. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."

This was written in 1882, the high-water mark of capitalist prosperity in Britain. Capitalism had not then entered upon its decline, and the political backwardness of the working class, sharing to some extent in capitalist prosperity, can then be readily understood. But what is not so easy to understand is that this estimate of Engels, correctly applied to the working class of 1882, equally applies to a large section of the working class today, when the economic system of Capitalism is in contradiction to social needs, when Capitalism has no longer any historical justification for continuing to exist, and when working class prosperity has been replaced by low wages, unemployment, poverty and despair.

The very causes which should bring about unity between the British and colonial workers serve to keep them divided. For this, responsibility lies not only with the recognised organs of capitalist propaganda, but with the hierarchy of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

The pro-capitalist role of the Labour Party, however, is not the result of accident or because of the treachery of individual leaders. The respectability and reactionary leadership of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions is a direct product of the successful exploitation of the colonies by imperialism; it is a product of the British working class at the time when it was sharing in capitalist prosperity. This comparative prosperity had its effect on the British working class *politically*: it determined to some extent the velocity of the growth of political class consciousness. Thus Lenin wrote:

“Imperialism has the tendency to create privileged sections even among the workers, and to separate them from the main proletarian masses... It must be observed that in Great Britain the tendency of Imperialism to split the workers, to strengthen opportunism among them, and cause temporary decay in the working class movement.” (Lenin. *Imperialism*, page 96.)

The development took place with the very beginning of the prosperity of industrial capitalism. Already in 1858, Engels was able to write to Marx:

“.....the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat *as well as* a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is of course to a certain extent justifiable.”

Much later, in 1881, Engels observed that the result of this bourgeoisification of a section of the working class was that the English working class were allowing themselves “to be led by men sold to, or at least paid by, the middle-class.”

The Labour Party hierarchy and the Trade Union bureaucracy are the direct product of the creation by Imperialism of these privileged sections of the working class: they are the product of the creation of a Labour aristocracy, divorced from the real interests of the proletarian mass. Thus were born the Uriah Heeps, the MacDonalds, Thomases and Morrisons, of the Labour Party leaderships, the Labour jingos and the Labour imperialists.

The conditions which created the Labour aristocracy and the Labour hierarchy do not exist to-day. The comfortable living standards of the workers have vanished for ever under capitalism. Britain is no longer the workshop of the world. Industrial competition on a huge scale has successfully challenged the British monopoly of the world market; the export of capital has resulted in the development of industry in backward countries which were formerly exclusive monopolies for British goods; the installation of modern machinery run for private profit is rapidly eliminating the necessity of much labour power, and the resulting unemployment and low wages has materially affected the national

purchasing capacity; the exploitation of the colonial markets has reduced the purchasing capacity of those markets to the minimum: on the one hand overproduction of wealth and on the other mass poverty and hunger. And as capitalism becomes more involved in the net of its own contradictions, so do the standards of the working class go from bad to worse. The remnant of the Labour aristocracy is nothing but a ghost of former prosperity; the growth of unemployment and the reduction in wages is a daily feature of industrial life; the struggle for existence becomes increasingly difficult. But in proportion to the growth of hunger and misery among the working class develops mass economic discontent crystallising into the revolutionary class-struggle; but the revolutionary class-struggle in Britain as yet is not linked up with the struggle of the colonial workers against imperialist exploitation.

Old prejudices, old traditions have still their hold. The illusions of prosperity die slowly. The Labour Party embodies these old prejudices and superstitions, which combine to prolong the domination of the reactionary clique in control of the party machine. The working class as a whole has not yet realised that its leaders are in fact the agents of their class enemy. The memory of concessions obtained when capitalism was still able to make concessions, blinds a large section of the workers to the role which the leadership is at present pursuing.

The Labour hierarchy has a very important task to fulfil on behalf of decadent capitalism. In the first place it has to keep the confidence of the working class by means of demogogy, precious promises, and by its organs of propaganda; secondly, it has to use that confidence in order to canalise the mass discontent into harmless channels, to lead the working class away from the path of revolutionary action towards that of peaceful parliamentary reform; thirdly, it has to prevent unity in action between the British workers and the colonial peoples. A parliamentary majority is the panacea offered for all woes. Twice has the working class been deluded into returning a Labour Government which did not fulfil a single one of its promises, and finally handed over the administration to the Tories. Who was to blame? The working-class, say the Labour imperialists. The workers failed to give the

Labour Government a sufficient majority to do otherwise than carry on the policy of capitalism. Working class apathy and backwardness are along to blame; return us in a sufficient majority, they cry, and we will set about establishing socialism, not, of course, by the Moscow method, but by the peaceful, pleasant and friendly method of "nationalisation with compensation." It is doubtful whether to establish this bogus Utopia the Labour imperialist would consider any majority sufficient.

In this way the Labour hierarchy acts as a brake on the progress of the revolutionary movement. The workers, however, cannot be deceived for all time. Already an important section of the working class has emancipated itself from the stultifying influence of the Labour Party leadership, and the revolt is in evidence even within the ranks of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. It remains for the revolutionary movement not only to enlarge this revolt until it embraces the largest section of the working class, but to co-ordinate it with the struggle of the colonial peoples against imperialism.

### III

It is dangerous to underestimate the effect of the pernicious propaganda carried on among the British workers by capitalism through its various agencies. It is represented that the industrial depression and unemployment among the British workers are caused, not by the insoluble contradictions of capitalism mentioned above, but by the industrial competition on the Indian market of Japanese and Indian mills employing slave labour. In this way British Capitalism thrusts the blame for the evils caused by the decay of its own economic system on to the shoulders of the colonial people, and uses its failure to keep the British and colonial workers divided. The enemy is not the British capitalist, but the Indian and Japanese worker, who, accustomed to a low standard of living, is able and willing to work for low wages. But capitalism is not content merely to slander in this fashion the colonial workers; it seeks further to kill two birds with one stone, and to make a profit out of the dissensions which it has sown among its class-enemy.



The capitalist agencies point out that Indian and Japanese competition is successful because of the low cost of production owing to the low cost of labour. From this premise they proceed to draw the conclusion that the only solution for British industry is to lower the cost of production in Britain. This can only be done by lowering the standards of British workers as near as possible to the Indian level. The moral is not one of *raising* Indian standards, but of *lowering* British standards. Thus British Capitalism shows itself a disciple of Spengler, the degenerate arch-prophet of fascism, who found that the only solution for western civilisation would be to reduce the standards of "that luxurious animal, the white worker" to those of the negro.

But this is no mere theory. Rationalisation in the Lancashire cotton industry is now the order of the day, and the sole object of this rationalisation is to reduce the cost of production in Lancashire as near as possible to the Eastern standard. Freda Utey, who has made an authoritative study of the cotton industry in Lancashire, Japan and India, explain exactly what is meant by rationalisation in her book, *Lancashire and the Far East*:

"To-day many of the employers, faced with the competition of the even worse paid Eastern workers, want to bring wages in Lancashire down to the early nineteenth century level, to lengthen hours and introduce double-shift working. They want to speed up and speed up again, to do away with the old price lists and conditions won by the workers struggles in the past; in a word they want, in the sacred name of rationalisation, to render labour in the mills more intense than ever it has been before."

Nor should it be thought that the existing standards which are to be reduced are high. The same authority continues:

"Earnings are now so low in Lancashire that many workers are no better off than 'on the dole'. This is specially true of the wretchedly paid women on the spinning side, who are the worst sweated workers in the industry. . . Their homes are bare of the first necessities of life. Their food is inadequate, hastily prepared and hastily eaten. It must be true to say that no other workers in England, not even excluding the miners and agricultural labourers, live under worse conditions than the majority of the

Lancashire cotton workers. The few well-paid exceptions only make the contrast darker ... it is the poorly organised and sweated women workers whose labour still maintains tens of thousands of shareholders, brokers, merchants and financiers."

These are the standards it is proposed to reduce still further in the interests of capitalist profit. The British workers are to be reduced to the standards of Spengler's negro.

Rationalisation is now the slogan by which capitalism seeks to solve its economic contradictions and to safeguard its profits. There are two different methods of rationalisation, both of which, however, depend on smashing the existing standards of the working class. The large combines, having large resources of capital, wish to instal up-to-date machinery to displace labour and thus lower the cost of production; the smaller concerns without the necessary capital for such technical improvements, on the other hand, attempt to intensify labour and lower its cost. Thus the big cotton combine, the Lancashire Cotton Corporation, is proceeding to displace labour by the installation of automatic looms, while the smaller concerns seek to achieve the same result by introducing the eight-loom system, lower wages and speeding up. Thus capitalism uses the confession of its own failure, not in order to reduce profits, but to reduce the already miserable standards of the victims of its failure, the working class.

And the excuse? The competition of slave labour in India and Japan. Here it is worth noting that every attempt of the Indian workers to organise for better standards, which means a higher cost of production, is met with the full blast not only of the hostility of Indian capitalism, but also of that of British Imperialism, which bemoans in Lancashire the consequences to the British workers of the low labour standards in India. The imperialist attitude towards the Indian workers struggle is far from benevolent, as is shown by the Trades Disputes Act, the Meerut Conspiracy Case and the innumerable persecutions of trade unionists in India. It seems a contradiction between the word and the act; and it is a contradiction. From it the doubt arises as to whether the reason given by British capitalism for its attack on British labour standards, namely, the

competition of Japanese and Indian slave labour for the Indian market, is a true one, or whether it is merely another falsehood coined for the deception of the British workers, and to further stimulate their antagonism against the colonial workers.

It is true only to the extent that British industry is suffering from the competition of Japan on the *world market*. Japan by means of the artificially depreciated yen, large scale modern industry, and incredibly low wages, is able to flood the world market, formerly a monopoly of British capitalism, with cheap goods, so cheap that British Capitalism cannot successfully compete, however much it tries. Freda Utley writes:

"There is no hope that, by reducing wages and intensifying labour by introducing the eight-loom system, the Lancashire cotton capitalists can win back trade from Japan; for wages are lower there than it is physically possible to make them in England, and efficiency as I shall subsequently show, is not so very much below the English standard."

It is clear, therefore, that British Capitalism cannot successfully compete with Japan on *an open market*; but India is *not an open market*; it is held by Britain by the sword as a monopoly for *British goods*. Controlling political and economic power Britain is able to exclude all foreign competition from the Indian market, as well as to restrict, as Imperialism is doing, the expansion of native industry. Already there exists a high tariff against Japanese cotton goods imported into India, a tariff which Japan is able to circumvent to a degree by the depreciation of the yen and by a further attack on the standards of the Japanese working class; but Japanese goods are not excluded from the Indian market because Japan buys a large percentage of her supply of raw cotton from India, and this raw cotton is a monopoly of British capital. Thus British Imperialism in order to make a profit out of the disposal of Indian raw material to Japan, accords Japan a share in the Indian market. But it is a very restricted share. *The Japanese import quota into India depends entirely on its purchase of raw cotton from Berar*. Thus it is evident that, notwithstanding the crocodile tears of Capitalism in Lancashire, Japan continues to compete with Lancashire on the Indian market *by the free consent of British*

*Imperialism* bribed by the Japanese purchasers of Indian raw cotton.

It follows from this that the excuse given by capitalism to justify the further attack on British working class standards, that the trade depression in Lancashire is because of the competition of Japanese and Indian slave labour on the Indian market, is a deliberate falsehood. What then is the cause of the trade depression in India, which has led to such disastrous consequences in Lancashire? The real cause can be found in the terrible and increasing poverty of the Indian peasant mass, which, after nearly two centuries of British exploitation and oppression, has no longer the money to buy British goods. *The depression in Lancashire, a large part of the unemployment, is because the Indian peasant has lost his purchasing capacity.*

The authority we have already quoted, Freda Uteley, writes:

“Nothing but a revolutionary change in the political and economic conditions in the Far East, coupled with the lifting of the dead weight of debt off the British industry, can bring employment back to the Lancashire workers. But the latter have not yet realised how closely connected their interests are with those of the Eastern workers and peasantry.”

In other words, nothing but the end of the imperialist exploitation of India, followed by a social revolution abolishing the Indian landlords and usurers, and the socialising of British industry, can restore the purchasing capacity of the Indian peasants and the British workers, and thus restore the prosperity of British industry. Under Imperialism the problem remains insoluble.

#### IV

The Indian people has been described as “the most chronically underfed, underclothed and disease-ridden people in the world.” After nearly two centuries of British rule, the great majority of the Indian population never knows what it is to have enough to eat. The Labour and other brands of imperialists attribute this appalling condition to over-population, and heavy pressure on the land, and look for the solution in Malthus’ “libel on the human race”. Such an explanation of the poverty of millions merely shows the intellectual bankruptcy of the people who give it; for in actuality

the increase in population is very slow owing to the extremely high death rate. And even were the explanation correct it stands as a condemnation of British rule, when it is remembered that there exist in India large tracts of fertile land which remain uncultivated, to say nothing of that land which is not free but is owned by the State and by large landowners. This wastage of land combined with the primitive of cultivation, the result of the feudal relationships artificially maintained in India by Imperialism, leads to a shortage of foodstuff; and yet in spite of this shortage, in spite of the terrible famines which re-occur with unfailing regularity every year in one part of India or another, grain continues to be exported from India to pay for British expenditure on the army and civil servants. Even irrigation, without which agriculture is impossible in India, is the province of private capital investment, and is not undertaken for the benefit of the peasant in return for the taxes he pays, *but for the benefit of the British investor whom the peasant has to pay heavily for the water which his land requires.* Having thus created the basis of permanent mass poverty, Imperialism proceeds to deliver the *coup de grace* in the form of the Land Tax. The Land Revenue assessment was fixed extremely high, and amounts to 50 per cent, of the estimated average net yield of the land.

There remains the money-lender. Crushed under the Land Tax and the extortions of the landlords, the peasant continues to exist by the grace of the village money-lender. The enormous money-lending class is the real owner of the soil in India, and it is estimated that it receives in interest more than twice as much of the peasant's produce as the Land Tax. The result is that the peasant is under a permanent burden of debt, and there exist more than 6,000,000 actual debt slaves, *Kamias*, who work as labourers for the money-lenders for nothing but subsistence, the son inheriting the debt.

The terrible economic condition of the peasantry has grown progressively worse, and is chronic under imperialism, which prospers by draining India of all wealth. It was aggravated after the last war by the slump in agricultural prices, which coincided with the raising of rents and taxes. This final blow deprived the peasant of his savings, in the form of gold ornaments handed down

from generation to generation, and the enormous exports of gold bullion from India beginning in September, 1931, to the present time, constitute the final expropriation of the Indian peasant. The hopelessness of the peasant is revealed by the following quotation from a statement recently issued by the Government of the United Provinces:

"The peasants preferred to give away their land and renounce their rights rather than pay the rent, which under present conditions has become excessively high. Consequently the number of deserted holdings for the year (1931) grew from 20,860 to 71,430, while a number of forced collections of the Land Tax amounted to 256,284."

These figures, it should be remembered, are for one province only: the same situation is general.\*

Here lies the reason for the chronic poverty in Lancashire; the complete inability of the starving Indian peasantry to buy Lancashire goods. Faced with sheer starvation it is an economic impossibility for the Indian peasant to renew the inadequate rags which the standards of Western respectability force him to wear. And this dreadful economic condition is the direct result of the continuous imperialist exploitation of India. By the same process the British workers become progressively impoverished, and capitalism uses the myth of Japanese and Indian competition in India, to destroy the standards of the British working class, for which generations of workers have fought and suffered, as near as possible to the Eastern level. And all this misery, all this hunger, all this crushing poverty, is inflicted on the British and Indian workers for the sake of private profit. Imperialism is the incubus not only of the Indian masses but of the British working class.

The Indian struggle against imperialism and the class-struggle in Britain are one and indivisible. The common enemy of both, imperialism, can only be destroyed by the united revolutionary action of the colonial masses and the British working class. Never was there a time when the British working class should realise the truth of Marx's statement, "a people which enslaves another people forges its own chain."

## **Appendix (xv) e**

### **Fight Against Imperialist War and Fascism**

**Proletarians of all countries, unite!**

**To the working men and women of all countries!**

**To all toilers! To the toiling youth!**

**To all who wish to maintain peace! To all enemies of imperialist war!**

The German fascist Government has introduced general conscription. It has incorporated the German civil air fleet into the military air force. The law of the fascist murder-regime on the introduction of conscription means the open carrying out of the hitherto secret arming and a feverish increase of this arming. It furnishes the war parties of all the imperialist countries with a new pretext for increasing the insane armaments competition.

The German fascists, by creating an instrument of murder which even surpasses the pre-war army of hated Prussian militarism, further increase the international tension. The Hitler Government is placing war immediately on the order of the day. It immediately threatened the neighbouring countries. The German fascist are deliberately heading for a new imperialist world war. They are directing the points of their bayonets, the mouths of their guns, their aeroplanes against the land of socialist construction, against the Soviet Union, against the firm walls of which every wave of fascism beats in vain.

This great war provocation has been prepared by the Hitler Government by means of all the horrors of the fascist reign of terror. No fascist terror, however, has been able to break the resistance of the German working-class. Under the increasing

pressure of the difficulties at home, Hitler is increasing the nationalist incitement, the incitement against the Soviet Union, and is resorting to war. Working men and women, toilers, ex-servicemen and victims of the world war!

The German imperialists were able to realise their armament plant only with the help of the other imperialist Powers. The war allies of Hitler Germany, military fascist Japan and Poland of the Pilsudski fascist are supporting the arming of the German fascist. Step by step with imperialist Germany they are increasing their armaments for the purpose of attacking the Soviet Union.

Of all the imperialist Powers, English Imperialism is foremost in encouraging German armaments against the Soviet Union and favourishly making use of them in order to increase its own armaments. The war party of French Imperialism, the heads of the heavy industry and the fascist bands, who in France itself are persistently encouraging armaments, favour German armaments and are endeavouring again to bring France into the anti-Soviet front. The Italian fascists, who by their whole former policy promoted the armaments of the German fascists and who are now commencing their robber campaign in Abyssinia, submit as a pre-condition for recognising the German armaments, the arming of their allies, Horthy Hungary, Austria and Bulgaria.

German imperialism, which is now armed, is doing everything in order to obtain direct support in Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia and in the Baltic countries for its war plans by foreign political orientation to Germany and against the Soviet Unions, as well as by fostering fascist movements.

All who wish to frustrate the war provocations of German imperialism and its Japanese and Polish allies and the men behind it, must work for the realisation of the peace policy of the Soviet Union, for the setting up of the Eastern Pact. It was the peace policy of the Soviet Union which rendered it difficult and still renders it difficult for the German fascists, the Japanese militarists, as well as all imperialist war parties, to let loose a new war. All who wish to preserve peace, who are opponents of imperialist war, must support the peace policy of the Soviet Union and fight in order that it be rendered effective against German fascism.



Working men and women, young workers, toilers!

Organise the mass struggle against any alliance with fascist Germany. Fight against any yielding on the part of your rulers to the pressure of the newly-armed German imperialists! Do not believe the lying peace asseverations of the fascist Hitler Government!

The German fascist leaders maintain that the introduction of general conscription and the increase in armaments are only intended to protect the German frontiers.

They are, however, unable to name anybody who to-day, at the time of the introduction of general conscription, threatens the German frontiers. Hitler Germany was able to regain the Saar without any foreign-political conflicts. This is used by German imperialism, however, in order to stretch out its armed hand to the Memel district, Danzig, Austria, North Bohemia and Danish Slesvig, to the Baltic countries and increase its war incitement against the Soviet Union. German imperialism is not preparing for defence but is making ready for a robber attack. It insolently rejects the Eastern Pact, because it is against peace and in favour of war.

The German fascist leaders maintain that the introduction of general conscription and the increase of armaments are putting an end to the shame of Versailles. The German imperialist would like to put in place of the robber treaties of Versailles, the burdens of which they have shifted on to the working people, fresh and still greater oppression of foreign nations. German imperialism has already shown what baseness it is capable of. In 1918, when the German imperialist thought they had won the war, they dictated the peace of Brest-Litovsk. By this peace Soviet Russia was to be overthrown and pillaged, the Soviet Ukraine converted into a German colony, the dismemberment of Poland maintained and Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia secured to the German barons. The successors of those imperialists robbers who dictated the peace of Brest-Litovsk, the present fascist-rulers of Germany, have the same plan in mind, when to-day they speak of securing room for expansion of the German people towards the East. They want to obtain, with the blood of German people, territory for the German trust magnates, the Prussian junkers, the former officers of the

Hohenzollern army.

Communists and social-democratic workers, members of the trade unions of all tendencies, women and youth!

The Communist Parties of Germany, France, England, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Austria, Hungary and Lithuania declare:

Under the leadership of the Communist International we have fought uninterruptedly shoulder to shoulder with the German working people against the Versailles peace. We have fought and will also fight in the future against any fixing of the State frontiers by force of arms, against any national oppression, for the right of self-determination.

We shall continue with redoubled strength, at the head of the working-class and the working masses in town and country, to fight unweariedly and with all means of the proletarian class-struggle under the banner of proletarian internationalism, against the class enemy in our own country, against imperialist war preparations and war incitement of our own imperialists.

For this reason we shall at the same time mobilise the masses of the working people in every country: against the war provocations of the fascist rulers of Germany, the chief instigators of a new imperialist world war, against all their allies against all who promote the war-mongering German imperialism. We shall support the heroic working-class of Germany in its fight against the fascist dictatorship, against the war provocations of German imperialism. For we know: Hitler means war, and the overthrow of Hitler by the proletarian revolution will destroy for ever the war menace of German imperialism.

We welcome, therefore, every increase in the defensive power of the only fatherland of the working people, every step made towards strengthening its red workers' and peasants' army, which secures peace, every strengthening of the frontiers of the socialist country. In the event of a counter-revolutionary war against the land of socialism we shall support with every means the red army of the Soviet Union and fight for the defeat of German imperialism and its allies, for the defeat of every power which makes war against

the Soviet Union. We shall promote with all means the victory of the socialist Soviet Union in its fight against all who attack this land of Socialism.

War against the Soviet Union is war against the proletarians in all countries, against the working people in all countries. It is a war against all the oppressed and exploited in the whole world.

Those who wish to maintain peace, those who are opposed to imperialist war must know: wherever the German fascists launch war, there the world war will inevitably commence. No country will be able to escape this world conflagration and its effects.

We approach the Social-Democratic Party of Germany, and especially the Social-Democratic Organisations in Germany itself, we approach the Socialist Party of France, the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party in England, the Socialist Party of Italy, the Social-Democratic Parties in Czechoslovakia, the Polish Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Socialists of Austria, the Social-Democratic Party of Hungary, and the Social-Democratic Party of Lithuania with the proposal:

To organise immediately joint conferences, demonstrations against the war-mongering of the German fascists, for support of the peace policy of the Soviet Union, and for this purpose form joint committees.

Jointly prepare and carry out the May Day demonstrations under the slogan of the fight against German imperialism, against all who support its armaments, against the war preparations of our own imperialists; under the slogan of joint support of the fight of the German proletarians against the Hitler dictatorship, under the slogan of support of the peace policy of the Soviet Union.

We approach these parties with the proposal to make a joint appeal to all trade unions, workers' sport organisations, peasant organisations, to all mass organisations of the toilers who are prepared to fight against war and fascism, in order to draw them all into this united fighting front.

**Down with the chief war-monger, Hitler fascism!**

**Down with its war allies, military fascist Japan and the Polish fascists! Down with imperialist war preparations in all countries!**

For the support of the working people in Germany in their fight for the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship!

For the defence of the Fatherland of all toilers, the Soviet Union!  
For its peace policy, for the Eastern Pact!

Forward to the fight in the united front for the maintenance of peace, against imperialist war and against fascism!

Forward to the fight for Socialism, which alone secures peace.

The Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Germany, France, Great Britain, Poland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Austria, Hungary and Lithuania.

(Sections of the Communist International.)

## Appendix (xv) f

### Smash the Government of India Bill London Conference

*[The Conference organised by the India Freedom Committee at Denison House, on April 13th, was attended by 88 delegates representing 62 organisation, including 18 Trade Union Branches; the National Executive Committee of the N.A.F.T.A., the District Committee of the Woodcutting Machinists; in addition Labour Parties, Co-operative Guilds, the I.L.P., the Communist Party, the Catholic Crusade, the Irish Republican Congress, the Anti-War Movement, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, the League against Imperialism, and Indian organisation, were represented and over 60 visitors.]*

**R. Bridgeman** (International Secretary of the League Against Imperialism), in the absence of Lester Hutchinson, opened the Conference by briefly outlining the world crisis, and how Great Britain, in an effort to keep her head above water, was introducing the Government of India Bill to further exploit and shackle India, her greatest source of wealth.

Comrade Bridgeman also told the Conference that many messages of greeting had been received, and several from Indian working-class bodies, among them one from the All India Press Workers' Federation and the Allahabad Town Congress Committee.

**Ben Bradley** (Secretary of the India Freedom Committee) introduced the resolution by first drawing attention to the fact that the 13th April was the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwallah Bagh, where over three thousand workers and peasants in India had been shot down by British Imperialism. How British rule in India was maintained by force and this force was being brought to

its highest point in the Government of India Bill. So far, the opposition in this country to the Government of India Bill had been that of the Churchill Group, who, far from being opposed to the character of the Bill, thought that it should be made even more definite. Comrade Bradley pointed out how repressive measures were being introduced in Britain and throughout the British Empire as a result of the rising militancy of the workers, and this Bill cannot be separated from the Sedition Bill, the new Unemployment Act and all the rest as a further move of the British Government to counter this rising revolutionary feeling. Without India the British Empire could not exist—in the growing war situation also India played a very important part. She was the training ground for the heads of the British Army. Soldiers in India were on a permanent war footing.

Comrade Bradley pointed out the effects on the English working-class of the terribly low standards of the Indian workers. There they could not afford clothes manufactured in this country, which meant that a large potential market for such goods was closed, and as a consequence, the textile mills were closed down. Comrade Bradley also pointed out that while India was not allowed to have its own merchant ships, Indian seamen were being prevented from working on British boats on the grounds that they were foreigners, which argument was being constantly used in order to prevent unity of the Indian and British workers in their struggle against the common enemy, British capitalism.

Bradley concluded by saying that opposition to the Bill must be made much more vigorous—it must stop not at amendments, the demand must be for the complete withdrawal of the Bill, and the British workers must be shown the Bill, at the same time as marking a step downward for the Indian workers was also only a preliminary to a further lowering of their own standard of living. He moved the following resolution:

### **Resolution**

This Conference of working-class representatives and Indian residents in London, convened for the purpose of initiating a broad campaign against the proposed Government of India Bill, sends its greetings to the millions of Indian people now

subjected to British imperialist domination. We realise that the British ruling class has oppressed the people of India for more than 175 years with brutal severity, and that the terrible economic, political and cultural conditions of the great mass of the 353 million population is the result of imperialist domination. This Conference having discussed the proposed Government of India Bill, repudiates the suggestion that it in any way implements any pledge given to the Indian people for political and economic freedom. Furthermore, we emphatically condemn the reactionary proposals upon which the Bill is based, i.e., federation with reactionary and feudal princes, the control of the armed forces, foreign affairs, finance, trade, law religion and language, which, if passed, will make the Viceroy the dictator holding unlimited powers to be used in the interests of British Imperialism.

This Conference realises that the appalling low wages paid to the Indian workers and peasants not only impoverishes them, but also the thousands of workers of Great Britain, who are forced upon the unemployed market because of the lack of purchasing power of the millions of Indian workers and peasants, who are unable to purchase those commodities produced in this country.

This Conference is also aware of the fact that many workers' and peasants' organisations have been suppressed as the outcome of their struggle for better conditions and increased pay. We also realise that under the proposed new constitution, these workers and peasants will be fettered to an even greater degree by the increased power placed in the hands of the Viceroy.

This Conference realises that because the growth of the militant working-class and peasant movements throughout the Empire, the National Government has introduced Sedition Laws, Unemployment Acts and other repressive measures. The Government of India Bill is part of the general policy of repression carried through by the National Government. Mass pressure, however, has forced the National Government to retreat on previous occasions (for example, the withdrawal of the unemployment relief scales and the modification of the Sedition

Laws). Therefore, we welcome the growing united opposition campaign in India against the proposed reactionary constitution and pledge ourselves to unite with the Indian people in the struggle against the common enemy, the National Government of Baldwin and MacDonald.

This Conference registers its most emphatic condemnation of the Bill and demands its complete withdrawal. And in order to make such condemnation effective, the delegates here assembled pledge themselves to expose within and without their organisations the character of the Government's proposals and to adopt resolutions of protest to be forwarded to the T.U.C., Labour Party and the India Office. We pledge ourselves to support the Committee in its efforts to initiate the widest possible united campaign against these nefarious proposals, and to demand that the Labour Opposition should work for its complete rejection. Finally, we demand full and complete freedom of association for the Indian people, with the right to organise their own trade unions and political organisations. We demand the release of all political prisoners, the withdrawal of the armed forces of imperialism and the complete right of self-determination for India.

Dr. Soni, in seconding, asked: "Why at this stage is a new constitution being framed for India?" And the only possible reply is to crush the growing resistance of the Indian people to British domination. The only people in India to whom the Bill is acceptable are those who will benefit under the Bill—the landlords and princes and the official class created by operation of the Bill. This was shown by the character of the opposition to the Bill in India. Dr. Soni asked: "Why are the people in India so poverty-stricken; why cannot they afford to buy clothes manufactured in Britain—is it because they are lazy, is the land barren, don't they want clothes and shoes?" This is not so. The thousands of deaths yearly from snake-bite could be prevented if the feet of the people were properly protected by shoes. No, the cruel exploitation by British Imperialism is responsible for the state of affairs where practically the whole working population spend all their lives in debt, and in spite of all their hard work, literally cannot afford to eat or clothe properly. Dr. Soni also said it was important to explode the theory



that British rule in India was a blessing and a uniting force among the different religious communities. Britain rules by the sword in India and deliberately uses these religious differences in order to divide the Indian workers. In India, the British are regarded as "uniformed men." Much more must be done towards enlightening the working people of India as to the living conditions of their Indian brothers, and the effects of the dictatorship which will be imposed on them under the Government of India Bill.

**Mrs. Despard**, veteran Irish fighter, was enthusiastically received after having travelled from Ireland especially to attend the Conference. Mrs. Despard said that she had always been interested in India, partly because she was always interested in the oppressed peoples of the world, but particularly because of the characteristics of the Indian people—their craftsmanship and the richness of their country. And when we think of their former prestige and glory, their betrayal by Britain became more than ever tragic. Even those who worked hard, as only Indians can, with such infinite patience and precision, could only afford one rice meal a day. Why was this constitution being introduced for India? Because, in her time of crisis, Britain wanted to make sure of always having India to fall back on for resources. But, she said, they are not going to have it. Trade unionism is international, and therefore this is the avenue through which this measure must be fought. This great cause does not mean only the liberation of India, but the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the world. All organisations represented should go back to their members and tell them what this Bill will mean to the Indians—the richest nation in the world, yet so miserably poor. If we do our part, India will rise—but we must do our part.

**Mrs. Bhattacharii** spoke of her visit to the U.S.S.R., and the remarkable progress which she had observed there among the nations which had been formerly oppressed. Bride-purchase, for instance, at the age of eleven had been completely abolished in the U.S.S.R., although it still continues in British Beluchistan. The superstition corruption with which India is reproached could easily be removed by giving the people primary education.

**John Applin** (representing the Independent Labour Party), said that his party stood for the complete independence of India, and

for a workers' and peasants' Republic in India. He spoke of the high mortality in India. In Bombay, the infant mortality is 232.6 per thousand births, as against 80 per thousand in London. The fight for the freedom of India was an essential part of the worker's struggle here in Britain, where naturally the sympathies of the great bulk of the British workers would be opposed to the imperialist Government of India Bill. Unfortunately, it had to be admitted that the British working-class does not realise the full implications of the Bill.

After a delegate from the Irish Republican Congress had pledged the support of the Irish workers in the Indian struggle for national freedom, a member of the Electrical Trade Union said that the means of developing the strength of the working-class movement was considered all too seldom in the Trade Union branches, which practically never concerned themselves with working-class conditions in India. He stressed the danger of this state of affairs for British workers.

The delegate from the Southall Labour League of Youth raised the question of the communal conflicts in India so frequently reported in the British Press. The Chairman made a statement in reply, showing how the communal differences were artificially encouraged and exploited by the imperialists for economic reasons. In an educated India they would automatically disappear.

**The Reverend J. Wilson** conveyed a message of solidarity with the Indian people from the Catholic Crusade. On account of the severe censorship, he had found it very difficult to obtain information on Indian events, while books that he had sent to friends in India were confiscated by the authorities. A book on Socialism by the British Prime Minister had been confiscated in this way. He asked: "How much of the £120,000,000 extracted every year from India went to the working-class of this country?"

An Indian representing the "Friends of India", referring to the communal question, said that the communal clashes occurred almost exclusively in the large towns. The same religious differences existed in the hundreds of thousands of Indian villages, but they did not lead to violence and strife; this was evidence of the fact that the communal differences are exploited to-day by the employing class for economic reasons.

**J. Shields :** All the previous speakers have given you pictures of the conditions in India under British rule. The pictures given have been sufficient to rouse all the humanitarian feelings that exist in people against these things. But we would make a very big mistake if we thought for one moment that this Bill only affects the mass of the people in India. The Bill is a very sharp attack on the Indian people, and through that attack it is also a blow against the mass of people in this country. We must understand this, because only to the extent that we can get understanding driven home in the trade union movement and in the working-class organisations, will it be possible for us to rouse so tremendous an agitation for the withdrawal of this Bill that will enforce the National Government to act in this direction. The Bill, in fact, clamps the vice still tighter on the exploited people of India. As can be seen from the basic content of the Bill, it provides for a stringent dictatorship. It gives over-riding powers to the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors. It gives them the power to veto any of the legislation of the provincial or central legislative bodies. It strengthens the power of the Crown vassals in India, the Indian princes. It strengthens the influence of the Indian land owners.

In relation to the working people in the towns and the peasants in the country, it means a more merciless exploitation, still greater oppression and ruthless squeezing out of the last drop of blood in order to bolster up British Imperialism.

We must understand what this means for us here in Britain. The essence of the whole argument of the Government trying to carry this Bill through is that the new constitution, and the proposals in it, are essential for India if this country is to remain in existence. In short, their argument is that it is imperative in the interest of the mass of the British people that this Government of India Bill be brought into being. And this is the same argument they have used over and over again for India. They say, the welfare of the mass of the people in Britain depends on it. If we do not maintain British control in India, there is no future for the people of this country.

There has been British control for over a century-and-a-half, and what has it meant for the mass of British people? It has meant over three million unemployed. It has brought us continuous wage cuts and worsening of the standards of the British working-class,

and if this Bill is carried through it will act as a boomerang against the British workers and make their conditions even worse than at the present time. And so it is to the direct interest of the British working-class to fight tooth and nail against this Bill; demand its withdrawal and raise the widest possible agitation we can throughout the length and breadth of the country, and particularly inside the working-class movement. We have a big responsibility in this respect.

In the first place the Government will never succeed in maintaining the Government of India Bill on the mass of Indian people. But if we fail to put up a struggle against the Bill, then we are acting in collusion with the very people that are trying to intensify the exploitation of the Indian people—and the Indian people will remember us, because the Indian masses are helping to weaken the very power responsible for holding down the working-class in this country. And the more we can strengthen their struggle against British Imperialism, the more are we making it possible to open up a way in this country for the freedom of the British workers.

This Bill puts forward that the Indian working-class shall have no independent political organisation, no independent trade union organisation. In this respect, we must say that it will long stand to the shame and disgrace of the Second Labour Government that it imprisoned 60,000 Indians during its period of office, instead of endeavouring to assist the Indian people to attain their independence. There can be no independence and freedom here unless we struggle for the independence of the Indian people—and as yet, what have we done in this respect? Very little. The biggest opposition to the Bill has come from the Churchill group; and the Churchill group are not opposing the Bill because they are for the weakening of the control of British Imperialism. There is no basic difference between Churchill and Baldwin. They only differ with regard to the methods to be employed. It is to our interest to see that control is smashed.

How can we smash it? We must struggle against it, and the first essential is to make known what the Bill means and how it affects the broad mass of people in this country, so that we can raise the strongest possible agitation against it. If we succeed in rousing

this opposition, then it should be possible in supporting the Committee in its fight, to ensure that there is a huge avalanche of resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Bill from trade union and other working-class organisations throughout the country.

One comrade said: it was not simply a question of resolutions, but the fact remains that up-to-date there have been very few resolutions against the Bill and the number must be increased a thousand fold in order to demonstrate to the rulers of this country that the great mass of the people are against the India Bill, and at the same time to demonstrate to the Indian masses that we in this country are prepared to assist their struggle in the fight against the common enemy that is keeping us both down.

The second thing is to ensure that not only do we get the resolution passed, but a powerful series of meetings of explanation made throughout the entire country on the whole question of the struggle in India and what it means to the British working-class. In this connection, the essential points have already been raised.

It is necessary to raise very strongly the right for India to its independence—the right of separation from the Empire altogether, and along with this should go the immediate demand in this connection that the British army of occupation and the British police used in India shall be withdrawn from that country.

If we can strengthen these demands; if we can win the support of the trade union organisations, local labour parties (and the majority of the labour rank and file can be won for this point of view), then we can succeed in forcing back this attack which the National Government is making, and compel it to withdraw the Bill altogether. If we do that, it would be a victory not only for the Indian people, but a tremendous victory for the working-class of this country. It would be a blow against this rotten National Government, which is hated and detested by the working-class.

Therefore, I would urge all the delegates present to raise in their organisations the question of support for the campaign which this Committee is conducting. See that they make a point of getting their organisation to pass a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the Bill. See that not only this is done, but on every possible occasion the struggle of the Indian people is assisted, and particularly to make every effort to strengthen the ties connecting

the struggle of the British with the Indian workers, who are increasingly coming to the forefront and taking the leadership of the movement into their own hands, thereby giving as a guarantee that the class in India whose interests determine that it shall carry this struggle against imperialism through to the end, is becoming more and more a force that is able to raise such a struggle against imperialism that is considerably facilitating the struggle in this country.

I ask all delegates to study what is the meaning of this Bill for the British working-class, and on the basis of this, not only give expression to humanitarian feelings about the Indian question and the question of withdrawing the Bill, but to make it one of the vital questions affecting the life of the great mass of the population of this country on the lines of the campaign raised in the resolution, going forward to assist the struggle of the Indian masses and enabling a powerful blow to be struck for the independence of India and British working-class emancipation.

**B. Bradley** replied to the general discussion which had taken place. He said, in reply to the question of how far the British workers participated in the £120,000,000 drawn from India every year, that in the early days of British Imperialism a few crumbs were thrown to the workers, but the situation has now changed. This is shown by the simultaneous drive against the conditions of the workers here, and lowering the standard of the unemployed, etc. The £120,000,000 went to pay for the upkeep of the repressive machinery in India, the officials' salaries, etc., and into the pockets of the bondholders and capitalists. In reply to the question raised about *communal differences*, he said that where the workers were in big factories and organised, the Hindu and the Mahommedan had no differences. In the economic and strike struggles there was no question of Hindu or Mahommedan—high caste or low caste. They all stood together. He referred to the fact that this bogey of communal differences was exploded at Peshawar in 1930; it was the Garhwali Riflemen, a Hindu Regiment, which refused at the order of a British officer to shoot down Mahommedans. He closed with an outline of the main features of the Government of India Bill, and called upon the delegates to operate the last paragraph of the Resolution.

## Appendix (xvi)

### **The Indian National Congress And The Muslim Masses**

**Dr. Z.A. Ahmad, Ph. D.**

*[Dr. Zainul Abedin Ahmad is in charge of the Economic Information Section of the A.I.C.C., and is also a prominent member of the U.P. Congress Socialist Party.]*

The recent drive of the Indian National Congress to increase its Muslim membership by setting up Muslim Mass Contact Committees, to popularise the Congress platform among the Muslims and to draw them nearer to the Congress is a welcome move. It is a step in the right direction for we must admit that today the Muslim masses are predominantly under the influence of reactionary communal leadership, and that a special effort is needed if they are to be weaned away from this influence.

Lest this campaign degenerate in practice to vague and ineffective propaganda for Hindu-Muslim unity, it is necessary to understand the basic factors involved. Our object is to draw all the exploited sections of the Muslim Community into the anti-imperialist struggle and to give the Congress a real mass basis irrespective of communal differentiations. We must, therefore, take stock of the present position in the light of our past experience and find out the best ways and means to achieve this object as speedily as possible. In other words let us evaluate the significance and possibilities of this new move and ascertain the correct line of future action.

There are several questions which have to be considered. Why have the Muslims so far remained outside the Congress? Why has the Congress uptill now failed to tear away the Muslim masses from their reactionary leadership? How has the Congress, in the past, approached the question of communal unity? What is its present approach? Will the new approach take us any further than the attempts at Hindu-Muslim unity in the past? An understanding of these questions is vital for obtaining a correct perspective of the problem that faces us.

The starting point of our analysis must be the recognition of the comparative political backwardness of the Muslim community as a whole. A considerable section of the Muslim population has, no doubt, in the past taken an active part in the anti-imperialist movement, but generally speaking it cannot be denied that the Hindus as a community are politically far maturer than the Muslims. The fact that the Congress which has so far been the only well organised anti-imperialist party in the country has had a predominantly Hindu membership and that none of the denominational Muslim organisations has ever had an anti-imperialist programme is enough to prove this.

This unequal political development of the two communities must be attributed fundamentally to the difference in the character of their economically dominant classes. For it must be clearly understood that the classes which dominate economically dominate politically too. This is specially so in industrially backward countries where the general cultural and material development of the people is so low that the upper strata of the propertied classes, in a very large measure, shape and colour the outlook of the entire population below them. The political and cultural hegemony of these upper classes is broken only when a class conscious movement of the masses seriously challenges and eventually overthrows the property relations on which this hegemony is based.

Now the important point is this that while the Hindu community has been so far mainly dominated, both culturally and politically, by the Capitalist classes, the leadership of the Muslim community has remained in the hands of feudal elements. The



Muslim population in India is essentially a rural population. At the top of the community are the landholding classes, at the bottom a mass of poor peasantry. There are, no doubt, town-dwelling Muslim artisans, factory workers, shopkeepers, professional men and even substantial traders, but numerically they represent a small percentage of the total Muslim population of the country and do not wield any important direct influence on the Muslim peasant masses. The predominance of the bigger landholding classes in the community is clearly reflected in the class character of the leadership of all the Muslim parties in the country. The Unionist party in the Punjab is entirely a party of the big Zamindars, and so are the two Muslim parties in Sindh. The Proja Party of Bengal has a popular base, but it is headed by Muslim landholders. The Muslim League has always received a great deal of support from the bigger landowning classes.

Trade and commerce remained throughout the Mohammedan rule in the hands of the Hindus. The Muslim rulers, a feudal aristocracy par excellence, filled the higher administrative and military posts, while the Muslim masses who were mostly converted from low castes remained agriculturists. In fact right up to the beginning of the present century trade and commerce was almost a monopoly of the Hindus. The Hindu merchant classes were the first to come into direct touch with the British traders of the East India Company, they were the first to take to English education, thereby giving rise to a new Indian intelligentsia. But they were also the first to raise an outcry against the economic monopoly of British Imperialism in India, because British rule crushed their normal growth; it deprived Indian capital of the opportunities of profitable industrial investments at home.

The Indian National Congress was born as an organ of the young Indian Capitalist Class, it was formed and led by the intelligentsia which had grown under the exigencies of British administration and British trade. The Congress developed and grew in influence and prestige with the growth of Indian capital which during the War period flowed into industry on a large scale. Its growth naturally brought it into a sharp conflict with Imperialism. The Congress underwent a process of slow

radicalisation until Indian Capitalists having failed in all their attempts at peaceful negotiations with the Government, it felt the need of more effective methods. In 1921 the Congress took a big leap forward, it appealed to the people for direct action against the Government and launched a campaign of mass civil disobedience.

Throughout this period the Congress, as the mouthpiece of Indian Capitalists, remained predominantly an organisation of the Hindu upper-middle classes. Only a few Muslim individuals drawn from the ranks of successful professional men joined it. It had neither a programme for the masses, whether Hindu or Muslim, nor, (before 1921,) any direct touch with them.

While the Indian Capitalists were thus chafing under the economic restriction imposed on them by a foreign Government, British Imperialism was cementing its alliance with the Indian feudal classes. Ever since the introduction of the permanent Zamindari Settlement in Bengal, it became one of the main features of the British land policy in India to foster a class of big landlords who could serve as a strong social prop for British rule in the country. Thus in most of the provinces the peasants were deprived of their proprietary rights which were then vested in a handful of individuals who under the Moguls were either State officials or revenue farmers. In some cases as in Oudh, the Taluqdars, who by force or fraud had usurped large areas, were granted full proprietary rights in the land, expressly on the condition that they would always remain loyal to the British rule.

In short in less than a hundred years British Imperialism had created in India a strong feudal landlordism which was vested with infinitely greater powers and privileges, and protected by a far more elaborate code of land laws than any feudal aristocracy in the pre-British days. Being the creation of the British, this class became in time the main social bulwark of Imperialism against mass revolt. The Muslim bureaucracy and the richer landholding elements of the Moghul days secured an important place in this class and soon came to occupy a dominant position in the Muslim community, having had behind them long traditions as rulers and custodians of Muslim culture. The Government fostered them as

the natural leaders of the Muslims and their economic hold over the Muslim peasant masses enabled them to make their leadership really effective.

Thus while the politically dominant class among the Hindu was increasingly realising the need of enlisting mass support in its agitation against Imperialism, the dominant class among the Muslims was, with the help of the Government deliberately and systematically keeping the Muslim masses away from struggle against Imperialism. The Muslim upper classes exploited all the feudal prejudices to keep the Muslims permanently under the yoke of Imperialism. Sir Syed Ahmad, considered at one time to be the greatest Muslim leader of India, used to openly avow that he wanted to give a greater stability to British rule in India by providing the Government with a loyal educated Muslim bureaucracy. He built up the M.A.O. College at Aligarh to train up loyal servants of the Crown, with the funds he received from big Muslim Zamindars and Taluqdars. It was under such leadership that for decades the Muslim masses were deliberately misguided, deluded and kept politically backward.

The Non-cooperation Movement of 1921 was the first country-wide mass movement against Imperialism and one in which both Hindu and Muslim masses participated with equal vigour. It was essentially an expression of the wave of mass discontent which swept over India immediately after the War and which was occasioned by the rapid economic decline which had set in. The prices rose sharply during the War while wages and salaries lagged seriously behind, with the result that the real incomes of the urban masses, both petty-bourgeois and proletarian were drastically curtailed. The peasantry was hit during the War period partly by the rise in the prices of manufactured commodities, specially, cloth, oil, salt etc., but mainly by a rapid increase in rents which in the Zamindari areas were raised much higher in proportion than the actual rise in agricultural prices. The years immediately following the War brought a quick decline in agricultural prices but rents and revenues not only remained constant but even increased in certain provinces. All these factors

combined to give rise to an unprecedented spontaneous revolt of the masses in every part of the country.

But the leadership of the movement was not thrown up from below by the mass revolt; it fell into the hands of the Indian Capitalists and their spokesmen the propertied intelligentsia, who attempted to harness the mass discontent as a lever to press the Government into granting some concessions to Indian trade and industry. The Muslim masses, however in this period, came directly under the influence of Muslim middle classes who had been strongly touched by the anti-imperialist aspects of the world-wide upsurge of Muslim Nationalism after the war and who were primarily responsible for the Khilafat agitation.

Thus the Civil Disobedience Movement was not an expression of the organic unity of the Hindu and Muslim masses struggling for a common end; it was, instead, a makeshift united front between two distinct organisations, namely, the Congress representing mainly the Hindu upper and middle classes and the Khilafat Committees representing the Muslim middle classes. Communal differences were recognised by the leaders of both the organisations and though constant appeals for Hindu-Muslim unity were made, religious slogans were allowed and even encouraged. The leaders talked to the Hindu masses in one language and to the Muslims in another. The anti-imperialist appeal was invariably couched either in sentimental or in religious terms. The Muslims were asked to fight against the Government because the British wanted to destroy the Khilafat which was the only symbol of international Muslim unity. The Hindus were called to join the movement on the ground that the British had usurped their sacred motherland. Reactionary religious sentiments and feelings were evoked on all sides; the Hindus were made to dream of a Ram Raj, while not a few Muslims thought of the restoration of Mohammedan rule in India.

During the movement the leadership of the Muslim masses passed from the feudal elements into the hands of the Young Muslim Intelligentsia drawn from the lower middle classes which had been developing round Aligarh. A section of this intelligentsia spontaneously joined the Congress, but the Congress made no

attempt to draw within its fold the Muslim masses, or for the matter of that even the Hindu masses. The bourgeois leadership of the Congress aimed, not at the overthrow of Imperialism, but at extracting a few economic concessions from it, through a maximum of mass pressure. It therefore made no efforts to convert the Congress into an effective organ of struggle by pushing its organisational roots deep down among the masses. The Congress remained throughout a top-heavy organisation with a fairly extensive influence but with a weak and loose base. The Muslim masses were left by the Congress entirely in the care of the Khilafat Committees which based their anti-Government propaganda exclusively on religious considerations. In fact the whole Khilafat Movement was so strongly tinged with religion that in many cases its anti-imperialist aspects were entirely obscured by religious frenzy.

The Civil Disobedience Movement collapsed but it left in the saddle bourgeois reformist leadership of the Congress and the pseudo-religious leadership of the Khilafat Movement. There followed years of demoralisation in which, thanks to the clever manoeuvres of British Imperialism on the one hand and to the growing economic crisis coupled with the complete political bankruptcy of the Congress leadership on the other, communal strife grew to enormous proportions. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms by inflicting on the country separate communal electorates, communal representation in Services, etc., laid the foundation of a sharp cleavage between the Hindu and Muslim middle classes and the Imperialist bureaucracy knew how to work the Reforms as a powerful lever in fomenting communal tension. In the mean time the Post-war economic depression rapidly covered India which began to feel its effects as early as 1923-1924.

Middle class unemployment grew with leaps and bounds; a severe competition for Government Services set in; communal quotas heightened bitterness and a declining trade and industry fell back on communal appeals to capture more customers, and Imperialism fully exploited all this to its best advantage.

The Indian middle classes torn and harassed by a rapid economic decline became an easy pawn in the hands of Imperialism in its game of divide and rule. Communal newspapers, communal political and cultural organisations, Shuddhi and Tabligh associations grew up on all sides. And above all the middle classes succeeded in infecting some sections of the masses with the communal poison, with the result that within a few years the whole face of the country was darkened by a series of bloody and savage communal riots.

Thus while Imperialism was successfully wiping out every vestige of the mass revolt of 1921 the Congress leadership was helplessly looking on, awaiting things to take a better turn. Nothing short of an effective organisation of the masses for their common economic interests could serve as a counterblast to the growing communal virus of the middle class, but this was beyond what the Congress leadership could attempt. The class character of the leadership ruled this out. The collapse of the C.D. Movement was taken to mean the unpreparedness of the masses for a struggle and during the years immediately following the collapse, the passivity of the Congress became so great, that the field was left entirely open to communal reactionary leadership.

The Muslim masses who were never brought by the Congress directly under its own influence, were now taken further and further away from it, by that very middle class leadership which had headed the Khilafat Movement and in whose hand the Congress had very complacently left the fate of the entire Muslim population. With the break-up of the Khilafat, the Muslim middle classes infected in the same measure with communal hatred as the Hindu middle classes, swung right across to the other side. Back came the Muslim feudal elements in their old leading position and this time with added strength as they now controlled the middle classes who provided them with a bigger mass basis.

How did the Congress leadership under these conditions try to save the situation? Being incapable of building mass organisations on a class basis, it concentrated its efforts at securing communal unity from the top, through negotiations with communal leaders, through unity conferences, communal pacts, compromises etc.

General appeals for Hindu-Muslim Unity were not wanting in number, but these appeals were invariably meant to change the hearts of a handful of prominent communal leaders on both sides. This method of solving the problem was bound to fail because it demanded a change of heart which objective realities did not permit. Communalism has its roots deep down in the economic decay of the middle classes and as long as this decay continues no verbal appeals can possibly save the situation.

As the Muslim middle classes drifted away from the Congress, the Congress completely lost whatever little touch it had with the Muslim masses. The complete isolation of the Congress from the Muslim community made it more than ever predominantly Hindu in its membership. This naturally caused the Congress organisation to be dominated by the Hindu cultural outlook. But not only this, the Congress with an almost exclusive middle class membership, could not always keep itself clean of the communal bias, especially in those provinces where the Muslim population is in a majority, i. e. Punjab, Sindh and Bengal. This was cleverly exploited by the Muslim reactionary leaders to denounce the Congress as a Hindu organisation working only for the good of the Hindu community.

The isolation of the Congress from the Muslim community as a whole could be broken only by a direct approach to the Muslim masses and by waging a constant day to day struggle for the removal of their economic grievances. But it was precisely in those very provinces where the Muslims are concentrated, that the class interests of the Congress leadership came into direct conflict with the vital economic demands of the Muslim peasantry. In Bengal the Congress, dominated as it always has been by Hindu landlord interests, scrupulously avoided every possible political contact with the Muslim peasantry. In the Punjab the Congress leadership has been mainly in the hands of the money-lending classes which throughout kept the Congress as far away as possible from organising the peasantry for the removal of their main economic grievances, such as indebtedness. In Sindh the influence of the Congress has never proceeded beyond a small

section of the town-dwelling merchant classes which have landed and money-lending interests too.

But while the old Congress leadership was thus demonstrating its complete incapacity to cope with the problem of communal conflict, new political forces, which had more effective solutions to offer were rapidly developing in the country. The most important factor in this respect was the emergence into politics of the Indian working class with its socialist ideology. The post-War development of the labour movement in India pushed to the fore an alternative line of political action; a more militant anti-Imperialist line based on a clear recognition of the fundamentally economic unity of all sections of the exploited masses against Imperialism and its allies. The Trade Union leadership had a new approach to the communal problem; it had new solutions as well. It decried as futile all attempts to negotiate and form communal pacts at the top. It emphasised the urgent necessity of securing unity from below by building up mass organisations on a class basis and by drawing all sections of the masses together in their common struggle against the present system of exploitation.

It is to the everlasting credit of the Labour Movement in India, that it was not only the first to suggest the real solution of the communal problem but also to demonstrate the efficacy of the solution in actual practice. In the Bombay communal riots of 1929, while the petty bourgeoisie and the demoralised lumpen elements of the population were spreading murder and rapine all over the city, the working class, both Hindu and Muslim, under the influence of the Girni Kamgar Union, stood as a united solid force against the prevailing 'religious frenzy and butchery'.

As a result of the growing ideological influence of the working class movement, a Left-wing with Socialist leanings began to grow in the ranks of the politically conscious petty bourgeoisie. Inside the Congress, the Youth Leagues carried on active propaganda of a national democratic nature in favour of communal unity. Their propaganda differed from the earlier Congress propaganda in the sense that while the Congress recognised communal differences and merely appealed for



common political action, the Youth Leagues laid all emphasis on the cultural, linguistic, economic and political ties which bound the two communities as the component parts of one Indian Nation. This approach with a slightly greater stress on the economic aspect was also taken up by the left intellectuals within the Congress who were rapidly drifting towards Socialism.

The result was that on the eve of the second C.D. Movement a fairly large and vocal element in Indian politics demanded a new line with regard to the communal question, namely that of securing mass unity from below through a consistent struggle against common economic grievances.

The mass revolt of the second C.D. Movement was brought by the Agrarian crisis, which was as sudden as it was unprecedented in magnitude. In a couple of years the agricultural prices fell by about fifty per cent, while the land revenue demands of the Government remained constant and even increased in certain provinces. This spelt complete economic ruin for the peasantry which was already in a state of chronic distress. The crisis hit the town population as well. Industrial production contracted causing a great deal of working class unemployment. The middle classes were hit hard by a decline in trade and commerce. The result was a spontaneous mass outburst. But the movement was again headed by the old reformist leadership of the Congress which followed the same tactics as it had done in 1921. The mass revolt was again too strong for the leadership which after a variety of face saving devices called off the movement.

The Civil Disobedience Campaign again brought a section of the Muslim middle classes under the influence of the Congress, though it was not the old leadership of the Khilafat days but a younger and politically more advanced element, consisting of those who had been affected by the propaganda of the Youth Leagues and the Left Congressmen. But this element young as it was, had little mass following and could not, during the movement, wean away the Muslim peasant masses from the influence of the old communal leadership, although Muslim peasants and workers did participate spontaneously in fairly good numbers almost all over the country.

The most outstanding feature of this phase of the struggle, however, was the part played by the Red Shirt peasant movement of the N.W. Frontier. This movement having its roots in the extreme economic distress that prevails in the frontier villages, was inspired in a very large measure by the propaganda of the Nawajawan Bharat Sabha. It soon assumed mighty proportions and converted the Frontier province into one of the strongest anti-imperialist battlegrounds in the whole country. While the Muslim peasantry of the Frontier was thus effectively struggling against Imperialism, the Muslim peasant masses of the Punjab, Sind and Bengal remained entirely under the influence of reactionary leaders, thanks to the unwillingness of the Congress leadership in these provinces even to approach the peasantry. The Congress in these provinces, confined its agitation to a handful of towns, appealing only to the middle classes, and quietly leaving the peasantry to be dominated and controlled by pro-imperialist individuals and organisations.

The militant support of the peasantry of the frontier and the definite swinging over of a section of the Muslim middle classes to the Congress prompted Imperialism to resort to fresh manoeuvres to drive yet another wedge between the upper classes of the two communities. In the first Round-Table Conference the India Office managed successfully to prevent the alliance of the Muslim League with the Liberals. Immediately after this, the Aga Khan was sent to India to organise the All India Muslim Conference in order to consolidate the forces of the Muslim pettybourgeoisie as an instrument to counteract the demands of the Liberals and the Congress. But since the C.D. Movement was still on, imperialism did not commit itself to anything until after the collapse of the movement when Imperialism came out openly. There followed the Communal Award, succeeded immediately by Hoare's statement regarding the protection of minority rights.

But Imperialist manoeuvres were not as successful this time as they had been after the first C.D. Movement. Much water had flowed under the bridges since 1921. The constant pressure of the agrarian crisis, the presence of a powerful Muslim movement on the Frontier, the growing radicalisation of the Muslim

Intelligentsia as reflected in the development of Left tendencies in Aligarh and Dacca and among the Ahrars and the Jamiatul-Ulema, the consolidation of all the Left forces of the Congress in the C. S. Party, the spontaneous growth of a peasant movement everywhere and specially among the Muslim peasantry of Bengal and finally the rising tide of working class struggles, all these factors seriously counteracted the designs of Imperialism.

On the top of it all came the Elections giving rise to an extensive whirlwind propaganda by the Congress. But the elections again brought into sharp relief the old attitude of the Congress regarding work among the Muslim masses. The Congress Right wing-definitely ruled out the setting up of a large number of Muslim Congress candidates on the plea that the Muslim masses were not prepared to support the Congress. Instead they attempted to come to an agreement with the leaders of the Muslim League promising them support if they ran candidates against other reactionary Muslim parties. This policy again safely delivered the Muslim masses into the hands of communal leaders and organisations.

The elections however came as an eye-opener. Much to the astonishment of the Congress leadership, in several provinces where the Congress stressed its economic programme, the Muslim peasantry spontaneously responded to Congress propaganda and actively supported and worked for the Hindu Congress candidates. This caused a good deal of heart-burning on the part of the Congress Left which began to see how the opportunities afforded by the elections of extending Congress influence over the Muslim peasantry had been lost. It had been clearly demonstrated by the elections that given some work among the Muslim masses, they could be easily drawn into the Congress. The realisation of this fact by the Left created the move to set up Muslim mass contact Committees. The Congress Right was, however, sceptic about the wisdom of such a move. It still pinned its faith in negotiations with the leaders of the Muslim League and in pacts and understandings with them. But eventually it acquiesced in the proposal of setting up such committees partly because the Congress President vehemently supported the proposal and partly

because there were no immediate prospects of a favourable understanding with the League.

The Muslim mass contact Committees represent a new idea in Congress politics. These committees aim at approaching the Muslim masses directly and winning them over to the Congress without the assistance and intervention of those old Muslim communal leaders whose support and help the Congress had always hankered after, in the past. It is a definite challenge to those leaders and in this respect makes a clean break from the old Congress line.

But in order that the Muslim mass contact Committees may effectively fulfil the task for which they have been created, it is necessary not only to carry on an unremitting struggle against the communal leadership, but also to re-orientate the whole method of the work done by the Congress among the masses. The object of these committees should not be merely to enrol Muslim four anna Congress members but to link up the political propaganda of the Congress with the day to day struggle against the economic grievances of the Muslim masses. It is only when the Congress is able come out, not in words, but in deeds, as the real champion of the vital economic interests of the oppressed masses, that it will strike its roots deep into the soil. If it remains, as it is today, a predominantly middle-class organisation, torn between its loyalty to the propertied classes which control it and the objective necessity of greater contact with the masses, it will never acquire that strength, nor forge those sanctions which would enable it to overthrow Imperialism. The great majority of the Muslim population consists of poverty-stricken peasantry. If the Congress wants to win them over, it must break through the barriers placed in its way by the propertied classes which dominate the Congress, specially in those provinces where the Muslim peasant masses predominate. It must evolve a comprehensive programme of agrarian demands and must make all its lower committees carry on a constant struggle for these demands. The Congress has recognised the inherent right of workers and peasants to form their independent class organisations and the President has even issued circulars to Provincial committees asking them to support and encourage the formation of separate workers' and peasants' organisations. It is therefore now imperative that the Congress

leadership should in every province help in the growth of these organisations by securing their collective affiliation to the Congress, convert the Congress into a mighty organ of mass struggle against Imperialism.

It must be the primary task of the Muslim mass contact Committees to tear away the Muslim masses from their present reactionary leadership not by vague political propaganda, because such propaganda will not take them very far, but by demonstrating to the Muslims in action, how the Congress is fighting for the removal of their economic misery which their present leaders are only perpetuating. But the Committees should guard against any tendency to a separatist outlook. They have been created under a peculiar situation wherein conditions demand specialised attention to Muslim work. They must be looked upon as temporary bodies which must disappear when the present isolation of the Congress from the Muslim masses has been broken up. In no case can they be allowed to develop as communal bodies within the Congress having a separate communal following. Their main function should be to facilitate the passage of Muslim masses into those class organisations such as peasant Sabhas, trade unions etc., where communal differences cease to have meaning. Thus alone will they serve a useful purpose and help to transform the Congress into a powerful anti-imperialist organisation with its roots deep down into the economic interests of all the exploited sections of the Indian people.

## Appendix (xvii)

### **Taking Stock After The Elections in Bengal**

**Nityanand Chowdhary,  
Organising Secretary, B. P. T. U. C.**

*(The overwhelming success of all anti-imperialist candidates in the recent election has set radical politicians another problem, viz. what should be the programme and tactics of these anti-imperialist deputies inside and outside the legislatures? For obvious reasons no detailed programme and policy can be evolved to cover the whole country. To a very large extent it will be for these elected representatives themselves to work out the details of their day-to-day tactics with due regard to their strength and special circumstances in their respective provinces. It would be a great help, however, if those who are interested and well informed took stock of the existing situation and discussed the difficulties confronting them in their own province before taking a step which may later prove to be abortive or unjustified. It was this consideration which prompted the writer of the following article to review the parliamentary situation in Bengal.)*

Although this article necessarily touches upon difficulties which are peculiar to Bengal, it raises at the same time issues which are agitating the minds of Socialists all over the country, such, for example, as the formation at this juncture of an All-India Workers Party, or the tactics of anti-imperialists in those legislatures where the Congress is in a minority, or the question of work outside and independent of the Congress. It is

*hoped, therefore, that this article will initiate an interesting and useful discussion which will help to clarify issues of All-India significance.)*

### **The Anti-Imperialist Forces within the Legislatures**

The elections are over and it is now time to take stock. The main slogans of all anti-imperialists during the election campaign were for complete national independence, for wrecking the slave constitution and for the calling of a Constituent Assembly freely elected by the Indian people. Coupled to these major political demands were mass economic demands of peasants and workers or town poor. There were two big radical organisations in the field, the Indian National Congress and the Proja Party, besides a number of other anti-imperialist organisations such as the T.U.C., the Krishak Samitis and the Bengal Labour Party. The Congress returned sixty members, the Proja Party forty-one, other smaller parties were generally successful. The Congress is today the biggest single group within the Assembly, and the radical forces, if combined, would form a substantial minority. The fact that they could not form a majority is, indeed, entirely due to the structure of the new constitution, which has split up the people into artificial communal groups, and tended to strengthen the hands of reactionaries and pro-imperialists. In spite of all this elaborate machinery and in spite of the repression rampant in the Province, the masses have given their verdict in unmistakable terms. They do not want this constitution, and they do want freedom, bread and land. Broad sections of the masses, whether Hindu or Muslim, support a radical programme and look to the Congress or the Proja Party or their other representatives to carry through that programme.

### **Is the leadership reliable?**

Will these parties or rather will the present leadership of these parties carry through such a programme? Fazlul Haq, the leader of the Proja Party, has formed the new Government. He is known

to be an opportunist, who one day flirts with the Congress, and the next day may say that he will co-operate with the Government if the Government will co-operate with him, and the third day joins the reactionary ex-minister Nazimuddin. He has promised to carry through legislation to give relief to the peasantry. We may be quite sure, however, that neither he nor his supporters will be able to achieve the fulfilment of even the minimum demands of the peasantry through the constitutional machinery. Imperialism, while continuing its exploitation with even greater energy, will use men as puppets to wave radical banners and spout radical phrases before the Muslim masses. The cry of religion too, will be raised to prevent the combination of the Muslim with the Hindu peasantry.

Let us for a moment examine the case of the Proja Party. It is said on behalf of that party that it cannot merge with the I.N.C. for two reasons. In the first place the Muslim masses, though militant, have a natural antipathy for the Congress. Secondly the Proja Party, having a more radical agrarian programme than the I.N.C., naturally cannot think of merging with a more reactionary body. But what is there in the I.N.C. that the Muslim masses can object to? They live side by side with their Hindu brethren, and relief can come to them only with the overthrow of Imperialism and its reactionary supporters. There is nothing fundamentally in the way of the masses being drawn into the I.N.C., in fact their inclusion would tremendously help to strengthen the anti-Imperialist front by sealing the doors of communalism from below, and demonstrating the fundamental solidarity of the peasantry and other exploited sections of the people. Only such a combination would not be in the interests of Fazlul Haq & Co., who are afraid of losing a valuable weapon for bringing pressure on the authorities to secure their own petty demands. As for the supposed radical agrarian programme, we can judge its radicalism from the fact that Fazlul Haq is seriously of the opinion that he can carry it through the present legislature. This means that the Proja Party leadership is consciously deluding the masses, that it is making demagogic promises which it knows it can never fulfil. No. It is obvious that it is not its radical programme that is the



stumbling block in the way of the Proja Party's union with the I.N.C.

The position of the I.N.C. is slightly better. For all its tragic internal dissensions and its comparative loss of prestige, the I.N.C. still has the support of large sections of the people, especially of the petty bourgeoisie. Although the Congress has little influence over the Muslims it is nevertheless not a communal organisation and has its doors open to anyone who cares to become a fighter for Swaraj. At the same time the Congress has the largest organised political machinery and an All-India and International status that no other organisation can challenge. This All-India status effects its internal working also, in as much as its policy and discipline are determined not by local conditions alone but wider national considerations. Nevertheless, the Congress in Bengal, as elsewhere is a loose heterogeneous organisation, representing the collaboration of various elements, who have mutually antagonistic economic and social interests but who have joined together against Imperialism because they are all exploited by Imperialism. Moreover, as elsewhere, the Congress in Bengal is at present dominated by the Rightists and has its deepest roots amongst the petty-bourgeoisie. These Rightists though opposed to Imperialist exploitation, hesitate to develop the mass movement which alone will overthrow Imperialism, because they are afraid lest they themselves be overthrown in the process. The Rightist leadership in Bengal, therefore, while focussing attention on the new constitution and on the demand for rejecting it, suppresses the mass demands of the peasantry and the workers. Why is this? Because an alteration in the constitution could be utilised for gaining more power for itself by the bourgeoisie, but mass demands might mean a class conflict with landlords and capitalists which would threaten the economic and social fabric to the detriment of the interests of the bourgeoisie. The absence of the Muslim element in the Congress also gives a communal tinge to the agitation against the constitution, as attention is centred less on the broader aspects of the question and more on the narrow question of the division of communal seats inside the legislatures. It becomes a fight for the loaves and fishes between the Hindu and

the Muslim opportunists. Thus the national struggle for independence is not only completely pushed into the background, but the venom of communalism is secreted from above, enters into the arteries of the political organisation, and threatens to attack the masses too.

The other radical elements inside the legislatures are some representatives of the T.U.C., the Bengal Labour Party. (a workers' party with a mass basis a radical anti-Imperialist programme) and a few representatives of peasant organisation with a radical agrarian programme, but so far there is no common political organisation. Opposed to all these stand the solid block of Europeans(25), Anglo-Indians, Hindu Sabhaites, Independent Hindus and Muslims, and Muslim Leaguers, who are all alike in their hostility to Indian independence. There is little likelihood of winning over any of these for the support of an anti-Imperialist programme.

The I.N.C. not being in a majority must, consistently with its general policy, oppose all attempts at working or perpetuating the present constitution. Even the Rightist leadership cannot but carry out such a policy. There can be no talk, therefore, of the I.N.C. supporting a ministry. All such support would be totally inconsistent with Congress line. But if the Congress carries out a policy of blind opposition to each measure of the Government (be that Government what it may) it may find itself in the paradoxical position of opposing a popular measure—for instance a bill to give some relief to the peasantry. The Congress will have, therefore, to suggest its own counter-measures and not merely oppose measures of the Government. The leadership being what it is, we may be sure that counter-measures if any, will reflect the same class and communal bias referred to above that is to say, they will be such as to hold up and demoralise the mass struggle against imperialism.

### **How shall we strengthen the Anti-Imperialist Movement?**

The question then arises, how is the anti-Imperialist Movement going to be organised and strengthened inside the legislatures, this being the material available? The Congress is there, in opposition

it is true, but it is controlled by the Right—the Proja Party is there but its leadership is capitulating to Imperialism—a few independents belonging to working class or peasant organisations exist, as detached individuals with not very great weight in any of the larger organisations. Who then will take the initiative in putting forward the minimum anti-Imperialist platform? Obviously it would appear to be the job of the I.N.C. but the I.N.C. is not popular with the Proja Party and the independents are afraid of losing their identity if they ally with it entirely.

### **The proposal of a “Left” bloc outside the I.N.C.**

In view of this situation there are some leftists who propose the formation of a “left” bloc in the legislatures outside the big radical organisations. They claim that these independent leftists will be able to rally the left elements in the bigger organisation, and at the same time will be able to take an independent line, since they will not be under the whips of these organisations. They feel that it is this independent “left” bloc alone that can take the initiative in putting forward the correct anti-Imperialist line. This little group will consist of some of the T.U.C. men who are at present in the A.I.C.C., and of six to seven members of the Krishak Samitis. The T.U.C. men have been returned to the Assembly on behalf of the United Front Parliamentary Board. The opinion of the T.U.C. (Bengal Provincial) is not known, but it will undoubtedly be placed in a difficult position if some of its representatives are within the Congress and some independent of it. As for the Krishak Samitis we do not know what their opinion in this matter would be.

We find, however that things are far from right in the theoretical dove-cotes of the sponsors of this move. In the first place the Congress is attacked—straightaway as a “mixed” organisation composed of different classes and therefore not to be trusted with the task of leading the anti-Imperialist struggle.

The Socialists, it is maintained, do not trust this “mixed” Congress. The Indian masses can be freed politically and in the economic sphere only by the working class allied to the peasantry and all other anti-Imperialist elements. This means that the

working class—allied to the peasantry and all other anti-Imperialist elements must build up their own class organisations, and their own “class” parties. This class party will now be initiated by this parliamentary bloc in the Bengal Assembly; it will then work forward towards an All-India party. The programme of the party, so far will be:

1. To expose the slave constitution,
2. To create an atmosphere for the growth of the anti-Imperialist forces in the country,
3. To carry on work inside the legislatures that will help the work outside,
4. To call joint councils of the party and executives of the peasant, trade union and other organisations which are against Imperialism,
5. To promote a single All-India party with provincial sections.

The intelligent reader would no doubt discern in the above line of argument a lot of muddled thinking. But behind all this confusion the central idea stands clear—namely that the identity of the sponsors of the scheme must at all costs be preserved, and that they must be given a little boat of their own to row in—this new “Unmixed” class party of the working class-allied with the peasantry and all other anti-Imperialist elements. We certainly do not understand this sort of thing as working class leadership. Any party of the anti-Imperialist masses has of necessity to be a “Mixed” party, representing the present stage of struggle for the bourgeois democratic revolution. We are sure that no Marxist would ever advocate leadership of that sort—where the I.N.C. & the C.S.P. are completely ignored, the C.S.P. is not mentioned once, and emphasis is laid on the formation of a new Party *from the top* by a handful of deputies.

### **Should we attack the I.N.C.?**

The above analysis of the I.N.C. contained in this manifesto is misleading to say the least. The Congress never claimed to be a class organisation. It has the longest history of mass struggle against Imperialism. It may represent vested interests, but in order

to gain mass support it has to make itself a mass organisation with hundreds of primary committees and thousands of members drawn from all the exploited masses. Pressure from below also forces it to adopt a progressively radical programme. There is nothing in its election manifesto or its recent resolutions passed at Faizpur that can be said to be *against* the interests of the masses, though socialists may object that the demands do not go far enough, or are not precise and concrete. They cannot, however, jump to the conclusion that the Congress as a whole cannot be trusted to fight the anti-imperialist struggle. The B.P.C.C. or the B.P. Parliamentary Committee may be controlled by 'vested interests', but that does not enable them to flout the resolutions and discipline of the All-India organisation. If there is sufficient pressure from below to carry out the Congress resolutions, or even to go further than these the B.P.C.C. cannot oppose it for fear of losing its mass support.

It is said that the Congress in Bengal has no mass support. This is patently incorrect. The Congress has the support of certain sections of the peasantry and large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie which is an exploited class under Imperialism. In attacking the Congress as a whole we attack large sections of genuine anti-imperialists, losing sight of the fact that the petty-bourgeois class has an important role to play in the anti-imperialist struggle. Again, if the deputies elected on behalf of the Congress are drawn from the Right and have vested interests they have, nevertheless, been elected by the masses. These masses certainly take the Congress to be *their* organisation, fighting for their emancipation. Finally let us not forget that the Congress forms today the largest single party in the Bengal Assembly. Therefore to talk of the progressive elements forming a party outside the Congress is to betray an extremely narrow sectarian outlook, an outlook which may have serious repercussions on the movements for National liberation, as well as for the workers and the peasants whom the socialists wish to serve. By attacking the Congress *as a whole* the socialists spread the idea that the whole organisation is reactionary. They discredit themselves in the eyes of thousands of loyal supporters of the

Congress and thus play into the hands of the Right wing, which takes full advantage of such tactics to call socialists disrupters and careerists. Thus instead of helping to weaken the Right leadership they strengthen it, instead of radicalising and pushing forward large section of anti-imperialists into greater mass struggles they help to keep them disorganised, ideologically backward and tragically inactive. If the Congress contains classes with vested interests, these are fattening on the ignorance and ideological backwardness of the exploited masses that support the Congress today. It is the job of genuine socialists to raise the level of consciousness of the masses, to alter the complexion of the Congress organisation from below and to win the leadership from the Right. This can only be done by persistent and untiring work in and through the Congress. If our desire to make the Congress the forum of the National anti-Imperialist front is to be translated into reality, there is no other way except to work inside the Congress and take the initiative on each specific issue that comes before us. No amount of criticism is going to make the Right wing budge. But work and agitation inside the Congress machine, mass pressure from below, the demand for democratization and collective affiliation, the actual formation of United Front Committees for specific meetings and demonstrations for specific purposes will have its effect.

### **The Role of the C.S.P.**

Some of our friends confuse working class leadership with *their own* personal leadership, and in their anxiety to preserve their own identity as little leaders—be it of infinitesimal fractions or groups—persue a sectarian line that prevents the masses from combining. We must always think in terms of the masses—in terms of the united front between the working class, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. We must make every effort—strain every nerve—to consolidate and strengthen that unity. Hence it is we who have to make the effort within *every* mass organisation, big or small, to bring the masses that support these organisations on to a common platform and into joint action. We must boldly realise the fact that the Indian National Congress cannot be

ignored—that it must become the peoples' National Front against Imperialism. We must therefore show to the people on every occasion that we are not *against* but *with* the Congressmen—that we are not setting up something that will rival the Congress but that we are the *sincerest* and *most active* Congressmen. We must show to the people that the United Front is not a manoeuvre to increase our *personal* influence or to capture the leadership for ourselves, but that it is rather the means for increasing the power and control of the masses themselves—a means for bringing the National struggle into the hands of the workers and peasants.

The position of the C.S.P. in Bengal is seldom discussed. The Party is usually dismissed with the remark, "Oh it is an insignificant little group of petty-bourgeois intellectuals led by a disreputable set of people, more rightist than the Right." When pressed further and asked to explain why our 'left' comrades have not themselves made efforts to enter the C.S.P. and improve the cadres, they reply that the present leadership prevents them from joining the Party. And there the matter ends. Our 'left' friends never sit down to think whether it is necessary to do anything about it; whether the C.S.P. has any tasks to fulfil in the National movement. The talk of the United Front and of the I.N.C. developing into the peoples' National Front—but they do not visualise how this is going to come about. Indeed they set about it in a way that would precisely prevent this ever coming about.

Socialists have on several occasions given an estimation of the C.S.P. It has been pointed out that at the present stage of struggle the C.S.P. is the lever inside the Congress that will radicalise the rank and file and help to give organisation to the 'left' or progressive elements within the I.N.C., that the C.S.P. will help to develop the United Front between the masses within the I.N.C. and those who are at present outside. During the three years of its existence the C.S.P. has been undergoing a process of ideological development and it has consistently clarified its position and its tasks. It has today decided that it must broaden its base, that it must work towards the Collective Affiliation of workers and peasants' organisations to the Congress. At the same time, however, the right wing within the C.S.P. has consistently

prevented the party from putting its thesis into practice, has been content with remaining a small group of individuals, vocal from time to time in the influential circles of the I.N.C., but ineffective and inactive on the mass front.

It is our job to make the C.S.P. cadres active on the mass front. It is our job to break through this ring set up by this inactive right wing. If we recognise the necessity of the C.S.P. then it is our job to see that it puts its thesis into practice. Our 'left' comrades tell us that this is impossible, because the C.S.P. leadership will simply not acknowledge us, will not accept us. We reply that consistent work amongst the rank and file of the Party will force the Right to yield. They answer that there is no rank and file of the C.S.P. To which we say: "Then create rank and file, work in the Congress primaries and create a consciousness there, make the rank and file Congressmen feel the necessity for the C.S.P., make them demand expansion of the C.S.P."

### **What must we achieve inside the Legislatures?**

Coming back to the question of tactics inside the Assembly—we have to decide firstly what we wish to achieve, and secondly how we are going to achieve it. We believe that the legislatures must be regarded as platforms from which we can put our people's demands. We believe that no substantial relief can be gained through them. We have therefore to get the maximum support for our opposition to the constitution, for our votes of censure and for the demands that we shall put forward from the floor. It is obvious that the Congress bloc will be the biggest lever for this task. In our work inside the Congress our comrades should try to form a C.S.P. group from amongst the Congress deputies, and this group should be most active in pressing the Congress as a whole to carry out its resolutions, to implement its election pledges and to work towards a United Front with all other radical anti-imperialist organisations on the basis of an agreed programme incorporating their specific demands.

For this we shall need to organise a United Front between the Congress and other radical groups. We shall in the first instance draw up a manifesto making clear our line and our demands. We



shall then approach the Congress and other radical organisations and groups and gain support for our manifesto. We believe that the United Front must be formed in the first instance by the organisations outside the legislatures, and then when this United Front has been achieved these organisations should set up a machinery to control the work and activities of the deputies inside the legislatures—a United Front Parliamentary Committee. It is therefore necessary for us to organise immediately a Peoples United Front Conference and to get the Indian National Congress, the Congress Socialist Party, the Trade Union Congress, the Students Federation, the Labour Party, the Krishak Samity and if possible the Proja Party, to come to it. Such a conference will rally the masses to the United Front Platform. It will certainly be a challenge to the right wing in the I.N. Congress. It is absolutely essential that our 'left' forces are rallied and the masses are made to understand the real issues and the nature of the work inside the legislatures *before* the right wing has time once more to hoodwink them.

At the same time it is obvious that a C.S.P. group as such cannot work independently of the Congress organisation—the initiative for building the United Front of all anti-imperialists cannot then come from its group. Herein lies the necessity of an independent bloc of workers and peasants' deputies.

### **The Parliamentary Alliance of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies**

As representatives of workers and peasants these independents can initiate and consistently pursue an anti-imperialist line both inside and outside the legislatures. It will be their job to draw up a minimum programme of work, incorporating the political and economic demands that can be supported by the I.N.C and the Proja Party as well as by all other anti-imperialist fighters. Further, they will have to activate the Congress, (with the help of the C.S.P group), and the rank and file of the Proja Party, to put the demands of the workers and peasants as well as the general national demands for civil liberties and democratic rights, always to the fore; they will mobilise the widest possible support for

opposition to all reactionary and anti-democratic and repressive measures introduced by the Government; and they will themselves initiate radical proposals based on the immediate demands of the workers and peasants and try to rally support from the I.N.C. and the Proja Party rank and file for these. Finally they will have to insist on the important task of developing the mass movement outside and being independent they will have to insist not only in word but in deed. *They will actually help to organise the masses and initiate mass action in support of the popular demands.*

Since only an independent group can take such initiative, it will not do for these independents to merge themselves either into the I.N.C. or the Proja Party. It has already been made clear, however, that this independent group will not in any way stand in opposition either to the Congress as a whole, or to the Proja Party, nor will it in any way attempt to set up a rival organisation to either, outside the legislatures. On the contrary, its consistent effort will be to bring all anti-imperialist organisations into one platform, ultimately within the I.N.C. which will then have broadened and become democratised into the United National Peoples' Front against Imperialism. This Parliamentary Party should come into existence through a United Front Conference of all anti-imperialists.

What then would be the basic line of our Peoples' United Front Conference? We believe that the basic problems are those today relating to the bourgeois-democratic revolution, which the entire Indian people under the leadership of the working class has to achieve. We must therefore place in the forefront the following demands:

- (1) For Complete Independence.
- (2) For the rejection of the Slave Constitution.
- (3) For a Constituent Assembly freely elected by the Indian People.
- (4) For the immediate release of all political prisoners detenues and internees.
- (5) For repeal of all anti-democratic legislation.
- (6) For freedom of press, meeting, and speech.
- (7) For 50% reduction in land rent and revenue.

- (8) For abolition of all feudal dues and labour.
- (9) Cancellation of peasant and working class debts.
- (10) Land to Landless peasant Labourers.
- (11) 8 hour day.
- (12) Freedom to strike and picket.
- (13) Insurance against sickness and old age benefits.
- (14) Free and compulsory primary and secondary education.
- (15) Minimum wage.

We should also demand that all the deputies agreeing to this programme should report every three months to the United Front Committee, which should report to the Executives of the various organisations on the progress made in carrying out this programme. Inside the various organisations our demand should be for democratisation i.e. for new constitutions giving greater control, power of discussion, initiative and recall to the primary and lower committees. Inside the Congress we should continually press for Collective Affiliation of Trade Unions and other mass organisations and also for democratisation. The United Front Conference should act as a powerful force to activate the various anti-imperialist organisations and to release as well as organise the energy of the masses. It should also help to bring the masses that are now under communal reactionary leadership into closer contact with each other, one step towards that mighty solidarity, the Peoples' National Front against Imperialism.

## Appendix (xviii)

### **British Imperialism, Fascism And The Anti-Soviet Campaign**

**R. Palme Dutt**

THE bloody domination of Fascism and its foreign policy in Germany has given new life and hope to the British anti-Soviet campaign.

From the first moment of the accession to power of Fascism in Germany, British imperialism has shown the utmost activity in endeavouring to use the new situation in Central Europe in order to build the united imperialist front against the Soviet Union for a war of intervention, with a Fascist Germany as the immediate weapon of attack in the West, and the Japanese attack in the East. This policy has shown itself in the Four-Power Pact negotiations, the real driving force of which, despite the nominal Italian origin and sponsorship, has been British policy throughout; in the breaking of trade relations with the Soviet Union through the imports ban; and in the Japanese aggression in the Far East.

The British Labour Party has seconded and assisted this campaign by an ideological campaign of war preparation against the Soviet Union under the slogan "Democracy versus Dictatorship."

Taken from : "The Communist International", June 22, 1933, published from London

Note: The NAZIS came to power in Germany when Adolf Hitler took oath as Chancellor of Germany on 30 January, 1933. The imperialist powers started their conspiracy immediately to use Hitler against Soviet Union. The Leaders of the World Communist Movement also became alert about this danger and this article, written by Rajani Palme Dutt, will bear testimony to it.

Although the conflicting interests of the imperialist Powers have placed many obstacles in the way of the realisation of the British aim, the provisional signing of the Four-Power Pact in June, even in its present modified form, is a step in this direction. The abandonment of the embargo by Great Britain does not mean a change in principle of the policy of the MacDonald Government. It merely bears witness to the fact that that form of anti-Soviet activity is recognised to be inexpedient at the present moment. Sharp vigilance is needed against sudden moves in the future to consolidate the interventionist bloc of Powers, and force the situation to the point of war.

The united working class front against Fascism and the offensive of capitalist reaction is necessarily, at the same time, a united front against the menace of imperialist war on the Soviet Union, which is rendered additionally acute by the temporary advance of Fascism.

#### I.—THE FIRST STAGE OF THE BRITISH OFFENSIVE— THE FOUR-POWER PACT NEGOTIATIONS.

The National Government in Britain since its formation in the autumn of 1931, has worked consistently towards a break with the Soviet Union.

In February, 1932, the National Government broke off the debt negotiations with the Soviet Union. Captain Eden, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, stated in answer to a question in the House of Commons on February 8th, 1932 :

“The whole aspect of Anglo-Russian relations under consideration.”

In this answer was revealed the preparation of the National Government in the spring of 1932 for a wider break with the Soviet Union, if a favourable situation could be secured. Britain was giving diplomatic and material support to the Japanese offensive in the Far East. In April, 1932, the Four-Power Conference was held in London on British initiative. In June, 1932, von Papen, the open protagonist of a united war of western imperialism on the Soviet Union, was placed in power in Germany. In June, 1932, the Lausanne Treaty was signed, and the accompanying Pact of Mutual Confidence. The signs of increased consolidation of a united front against the Soviet Union were very strong.

This attempted attack in 1932 broke down on two main grounds. First, the growth of the conflict with the United States over the Far East, as well as over the debts and Ottawa, hindered too open support of Japan. Second, the situation in Germany was not ready. In the second half of 1932 the Fascist forces were sinking in Germany, and the Communist forces were rapidly rising, as shown in the September elections and the Berlin transport strike. The attack on the Soviet Union was postponed.

From the moment the Fascist dictatorship of Hitler was seen to be firmly established in Germany, British imperialism, in the person of MacDonald, hastened forward to greet the accession of the gangsters, and open a new era of foreign policy in close association with Hitler and Mussolini.

The sequence of dates is here important to note.

On March 6th the outcome of the Nazi terror elections "confirming" the regime in Germany, was known.

Immediately on March 7th the decision was announced of MacDonald and Simon, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of the National Government, to take the unusual step of a joint journey in Europe, to Paris, Geneva and possibly further, for the purpose of overcoming the deadlock at Geneva, drawing together France and Germany, and possibly, it was hinted, securing a common meeting of the four heads of Governments—MacDonald, Daladier, Mussolini and Hitler.

The attitude of the British Government to German Fascism was made sufficiently clear when MacDonald, explaining the motives of their journey to the House of Commons, on March 23rd, 1933, declared:

"It is perfectly plain to everyone that national life is being revitalised in Europe."

"National life is being revitalised." Such were the remarkable terms in which the National Government in Britain went out of its way to hail the advent of the pogrom regime of Fascism in Germany, which even arch-Conservatives out of office, such as Sir Austen Chamberlain and Churchill, were at the same time describing, for their own purposes, as "savagery" and "tumultuous insurgence and ferocity."

On March 9th MacDonald in Paris opposed the French demand that the Nazi arming of the Storm troops as auxiliary police should be regarded as a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Britain appeared already as the protector of Fascist Germany.

On March 12th to 16th. MacDonald. at Geneva, elaborated the British "Disarmament" Plan for the increase of German armaments and the reduction of French armaments, leaving the British untouched. In his speech to the League of Nations Assembly on March 16th, he proclaimed:

"Either Germany is given justice and freedom, or Europe will risk destruction."

Thus MacDonald, who, as Prime Minister, had been in control of British foreign policy for four years since 1929, only suddenly became aware of the urgent necessity of "justice and freedom" for Germany, the moment after Hitler was in power. The liberal bourgeois "Economist" sharply criticised the "blunder" of this partiality of MacDonald for Fascism (8th April, 1933):

"It was a blunder to open up the question of treaty revision precisely at a moment when the forces of reaction had triumphed in Germany, and thus to promise concessions to Hitler, which had been refused for a decade to a democratic and peaceful Germany."

It was, of course, no "blunder" but the consistent expression of British policy, aimed at the drawing of Germany into a western orientation by promises of concessions in the way of "revision," in order to form the anti-Soviet front. The relations of the ruling Conservative Party of the British bourgeoisie, whose puppet MacDonald is at present, and the Nazis has already been close for years.

Finally, on March 18th, after an attempt to secure a meeting at Geneva of MacDonald, Daladire, Mussolini and Hitler had failed, took place the meeting of MacDonald and Mussolini at Rome, and the announcement of the Four-Power Pact project.

The Four-Power Pact project has been officially presented as of purely Italian origin, the child of the brain of Mussolini, with British concurrence. In fact, however, the project reflects the continuous British policy. As far back as the period of Locarno, the battle of the

pact and the protocol reflected, in corresponding forms, the struggle of the British and French systems of domination in Europe. In April, 1932, Britain led the Four-Power Conference at London, which ended in failure. In November, 1932, the British Government officially proposed to the French, German and Italian Governments a Four-Power Conference to lead to a common understanding, but the project broke down in the face of French opposition. *The Four-Power line was in fact the continuous British line long before "Mussolini's plan."*

*From the outset the decisive and underlying character of the Four-Power Pact was an anti-Soviet Pact, covering its basic anti-Soviet aims under the misleading slogan of the "revision" of Versailles, the real aim being to add to Versailles a new Brest-Litovsk. This anti-Soviet aim was directly visible in the Fourth Article of the original draft, laying down a "common line" for Western imperialism "in all questions political and non-political, European and extra-European."*

Bourgeois Press comment widely recognised the anti-Soviet aim. Mussolini's organ, the "Tribuna" stated the aim with deliberate openness "to rid the world of Bolshevism."

"If it is necessary to defend ourselves from the evil which finds its fullest expression in Russia, but which has also struck Western civilisation, as a result of which all nations are compelled to defend themselves from within, then is such defence possible without the co-operation proposed in Mussolini's plan?"

"The time has arrived to recognise the value of the fascist ideas of Mussolini, not only at home, but also in the international arena."

But, for the success of the Four-Power Pact, it was necessary, first, to overcome the opposition of French imperialism, which, in antagonism to the German rising claims, had been drawing into closer economic and political relations with the Soviet Union, and of the lesser States in Eastern Europe, at whose expense the so-called "revision" would be likely to be conducted. This was the task to which British policy now set itself.



## II.—THE SECOND STAGE OF THE BRITISH OFFENSIVE— THE BREAKING OF TRADE RELATIONS.

The feverish activity of British foreign policy in March, expressed in the journeyings MacDonald and Simon and in the building up of the Four-Power Pact, should be brought into close relation with the parallel activity on a world scale.

On March 13th the embargo on the export of arms to Japan and China was raised. The embargo during its fortnight of existence had been no more than an empty gesture, since masses of war materials had already been supplied to Japan, and "existing contracts" it was explained, were to continue to be fulfilled during the "embargo." But it had served a "moral" purpose in covering up Britain's too open role as principal war supplier of Japan; and its removal, announced as justified by the lack of international co-operation, was equivalent to an announcement that full speed ahead could now be adopted with impunity for arming Japan for the next stage of warfare. That this next stage of warfare was likely to be no longer only against China, but against the Soviet Union also, was freely expressed in the British Press.

At the same time, alongside these general preparations on a world scale, it was necessary for the British Government to take the lead openly, and find suitable grounds in order to pick a quarrel directly with the Soviet Union and prepare a break. What were these grounds to be? The old grounds of "propaganda" were stale and could hardly be used again at this point. On economic questions, fulfilment of contracts, etc., there was no possibility of making a complaint. The debts question had been assiduously nursed for a long time already as a suitable ground (British Government statement already in spring of 1932.); but now, when Britain was engaged in most anxiously urging America to recognise the inability of Britain to pay its own debts, the theme had become highly unsuitable to raise.

British imperialism solved this problem by a step of singular, though characteristic, coolness and simplicity. It seized the occasion of a trial of its own spies in Soviet territory, caught and self-confessed, to make the bare fact of this trial, independently of the charges and the evidence, a case for a breach.

On March 12th the Metro-Vickers engineers were arrested. Immediately, the British Government took a stand (Baldwin's statement of March 15th that the Government is "convinced there can be no justification for the charges") which revealed that the British Government was not concerned with the truth or otherwise of the charges, nor with the most elementary requirements of international law between sovereign States, but was solely concerned to use the trial as a pretext in order to prepare the ground for a future break.

It may be noted that the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, in his speech in the House of Commons on April 5th, in introducing the Embargo Bill, betrayed, in one passage at the end, that the Bill had not, in reality, been prepared solely with reference to the trial. He said:

"What is the real difficulty? We may just as well face it. It is that owing to the constitution of Soviet Russia, owing to the fact that the State, the Government, is the sole purchaser and the sole buyer, the application in a trading agreement of what is called the 'most-favoured-nation clause' is distorted and ridiculous. Russia has it in its power to stop any goods going from this country to Russia, and she can do that without any breach of the 'most-favoured-nation clause,' because the only importer is the Russian State."

Therefore, he asked the House "to give the Government the power which the Soviet Government has got at this moment." Here, for one moment, the long hypocritical lamentations on behalf of the arrested spies are forgotten, and the real issue peeps through. The real enemy to be struck at is revealed as the Soviet trade monopoly.

The unlimited violence and poison of the Press campaign let loose in connection with the trial bore a character only comparable to war-time. The extent of this can best be measured, not merely from the frenzies of the jingo Press, but still more from the language at this period, even of the left-liberal "Manchester Guardian" with its reputation, normally, of a more balanced judgment, and even of a relatively "sympathetic" attitude to the Soviet Union. This journal produced, at the beginning of April, an editorial on "Russia," which described the Soviet regime as.

"a boundless, brutal despotism..... The only remedy for all their ills is terror";

and continued with the direct threat of approaching overthrow:

"The Russian people is inured to pain by long experience, is without the means or power to organise. It does not ask for much from those who govern it. But history has shown that it does not endure for ever." ("Manchester Guardian Weekly," April 14th, 1933.)

Such was the language of this journal, which had once won fame by its printing of glowing accounts from progressive correspondents of the meaning and achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution. From this the depth and universality of the war-hysteria which was let loose in Britain against the Soviet Union by every channel of bourgeois influence, can be measured.

The Labour Party and its Press, in essence, assisted the National Government's campaign.

Lansbury, leader of the Labour Party (stated in the House of Commons debate on April 5th) expressed the viewpoint of the Labour Party:

"They did not agree with dictatorship methods, whether they were the methods of Mussolini, of Hitler, or of Stalin..... *The difference between the Opposition and the Government was simply one of method.*"

The common basis of "democracy," as the united front of the National Government and the Labour Party against the Soviet Union, against the revolutionary working class, is here briefly expressed.

The Labour Member of Parliament, Logan, though not speaking as an official representative of the Labour Party, declared:

"He was not satisfied with the treatment these men had received in Russia. Although he was a member of the Labour Party, and anxious and willing to do his bit, the Russian Government was not his standard of democracy..... *To him the Communist system was diabolical. It was antagonistic to the most progressive measures of mankind, and the sooner it was got rid of the better.*" ("Times" report April 6th, 1933.)

Logan's speech was praised by the entire bourgeois Press as "the best speech of the debate," "an honest English expression," etc. And with reason. This Labour Member of Parliament had said aloud for the Government and the bourgeoisie, what they were thinking, what they

were wishing the mass of the nation to think, but what they did not dare to say directly . "The sooner it was got rid of the better."

On April 19th, the British embargo on Soviet imports covering 80 per cent. of previous imports, was proclaimed. The significance of this step was not merely as a declaration of economic war, but as an economic war, in which the political aim of injuring Soviet Union was openly adopted, even at the expense of direct injury and loss to British economic interests (the Soviet market was Britain's only rising market and the British machine-tool industry had become dependent as to 80 per cent. on the Soviet market). It was still more a direct lead internationally to a general boycott, leading the way to a general political break.

On April 19th the British embargo was proclaimed. On April 20th Japan launched its ultimatum against the Soviet Union over the Chinese-Eastern Railway.

The confidence and aggression with which British Imperialism let loose its campaign of provocation against the Soviet Union in March-April reflects its belief in the favourable international situation which it judged itself to have secured through the victory of fascism and the provisional adoption of the Four-Power Pact (the French Ambassador in Rome, Jouvenel, had also favoured the Pact, and was only to be disavowed).

But already in April it became clear that the path of advance would not be smooth, and that the fate of the Four-Power Pact was uncertain. The tangle of Contradictions which followed, both between Britain and France and between Britain and Germany, and also between Britain and the United States, and even between Britain and Japan, prevented a rapid following-up of the offensive delivered in April.

### III—THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF THE FOUR-POWER PACT.

The essence of the Four-Power Pact in its first form as, brought forward in March, was the specific inclusion of "revision" of the treaties (Article 2) as definitely formulated price to win Germany and Italy into a common front with the Western Powers.

But this project left out of account the interests of French imperialism, and, still more, of Poland and the Little Entente States, at whose expense revision threatened to be carried out.

The opposition of these rapidly made itself. French expression was openly hostile. Poland and the Little Entente were in a frenzy of anger and suspicion. Rapid interchanges passed at Paris (Titulesco visit). It was clear that the Four-Power Pact, in its original form, could not go through.

On this development British opinion rapidly took alarm. Britain could not afford to break directly with France; the British-French Entente and Versailles still remain the continuous basis of British policy in Europe, despite all the intrigues with Germany and Italy to weaken French hegemony. This alarm was all the greater since the wave of nationalist feeling in Germany unloosed by the Nazi propaganda showed signs of not being confined, as intended, to the eastern direction, but of also directing itself against France and even against the British colonial monopoly, for instance, the Hugenberg plan for the return of the German colonies in Africa.

A brake had now to be placed on the forces that were being unchained. Hence arose the series of prominent and emphatic warnings of the "Elder Statesmen," Sir Austen Chamberlain and Grey, as well as of the leading Conservative outside the Government, Churchill, against the dangerous tendencies of the new Germany and the menace of a too-open policy of "revision" and reaffirming friendship and close alliance with France. Chamberlain denounced the revival of "the worst of the All Prussian imperialism" amid the applause of Parliament. Churchill declared: "Thank God for the French Army!" The "revision" tendencies and "secret diplomacy" and friendliness to Fascism of MacDonald were sharply criticised by these high priests of Conservatism and friends of Fascism, not out of any hostility to Fascism, but solely through the immediate conflict of the interests of British imperialism against German (it was hinted that MacDonald had even discussed the cession of Tanganyika to Germany). Amid the thunder of these speeches (especially the House of Commons debate of April 13th) the Four-Power Pact passed for the time out of the picture.

The effect in Germany was an immediate widening of the distance between Germany and Britain. This showed itself in the renewal on May 7th of the German-Soviet Treaty.

At the same time difficulties were gathering for British policy outside Europe.

Between Japan and Britain sharp commercial antagonism was developing, the raising, of the tariffs on Japanese textile exports to India 75 per cent, and the threat by Japan to respond by a boycott of British goods.

Still more between the United States and Britain a difficult situation was developing.

On April 19th the United States passed off gold, thus delivering its supreme offensive against British pound depreciation, and timing it to coincide with the arrival of MacDonald.

Not only that, but the possibility of the United States recognition of the Soviet Union came strongly to the front. This was further indicated in the direct delivery of the Roosevelt Note of May 16th to the Soviet Union.

For all these reasons a delay developed in the British offensive plans against the Soviet Union.

"Nevertheless, British diplomacy at once got to work to rebuild the shattered projects. For this purpose two steps were essential.

The First was to establish closer contact with France in the re-shaping of the Four-Power Pact. This process was carried on in a series of negotiations in Paris during May and the beginning of June.

The second was to exercise a moderating influence upon Germany, and draw Germany back into a Western orientation, for which it was not necessary to expend much labour since in external affairs the political course of the Fascist dictatorship remained sharpened against the Soviet Union. For this purpose combined threats and promises were brought into play. The signing of the German-Soviet Treaty on May 7th was answered by an official menacing speech on May 11th, no longer of statesmen outside the Government, but of the Minister of War, Lord Hailsham, directly threatening "sanctions." Rosenberg, on his mission to England, at the same time was received by the Foreign Secretary, and fully instructed as to the British viewpoint on how Germany should act. On May 13th Rosenberg returned with his lesson.

On this basis the situation was ripe for the revival of the Four-Power Pact. The offending clauses were revised. All assurances were given by Britain to France, which in turn gave its assurances to

Poland and the Little Entente. The Little Entente finally declared satisfaction with these assurances.

On June 7th the revised Four-Power Pact was initialled at Rome.

The revised Four-Power Pact is given in its published clauses the maximum possible harmless appearance. Neither "revision" of treaties, nor the "common line" in "European and extra-European questions" any longer directly appears. Subordination to the League of Nations is reaffirmed at every point to meet the French demands. Article 4 is toned down into the make-believe innocent form of "consultation" on "all economic questions which have a common interest for Europe, and particularly for its economic restoration" (a clause sufficiently elastic to be easily capable of development to anti-Soviet aims).

It is, however, sufficiently obvious that the Four-Power Pact, if ratified, represents a definite diplomatic grouping of the strongest European imperialist countries directed in a significant degree against the Soviet Union. Certainly, the contradictions between the Powers will continue, and may render it ineffective. But, undoubtedly, if it is a question of the imperialist British Government, the aim of British policy will also in the future consist in attempts to get together an anti-Soviet bloc, leading up to a war of intervention.

This policy is continued a stage further at the World Economic Conference. The anti-Soviet aim was openly proclaimed by the Canadian Prime Minister, Bennett:

"It is not without significance that one of the delegates representing at least one-twelfth of the world's population has proclaimed from this platform that the cause of the disaster is the capitalist system itself. That is a challenge to the rest of the world. From this common ground we can advance together to recovery."

Even more direct was the Hugenburg Memorandum, which undoubtedly expressed the policy of the German Government:

"The second measure would be to place at the disposal of the 'people without space' new areas in which this energetic race could settle colonies and carry out great works of peace. .... War, revolution and internal disruption have found a starting point in Russia and in great areas of the East. This destructive

process still goes on. Now is the moment to stop it."  
(Hugenberg.)

The general increase of the power of the U.S.S.R., the strengthening of its international position and stability, exhibited by it in the conflict; the extreme intensification of the trade and currency war between the U.S.A., Great Britain and the countries of the "gold bloc" as well as the growing dissatisfaction among the masses of the British working-class against the policy of the embargo—all this caused British imperialism to retreat anew, giving up the embargo. It is obvious, however, that this retreat bears the character of a compulsory manoeuvre. British imperialism is awaiting the onset of more favourable international weather conditions for the activation of its anti-Soviet policy. *The intensity of the crisis hastens the tempo of development.*

Against this the working class of the world needs to be prepared.

#### IV.—THE LABOUR PARTY WAR PREPARATION CAMPAIGN— "DEMOCRACY OR DICTATORSHIP."

Parallel to the campaign of British imperialism for the organisation of the anti-Soviet front goes the Labour Party ideological campaign of anti-Soviet incitement, which is now reaching an extreme character.

The victory of Fascism in Germany presented the Labour Party with a difficult problem.

On the one hand, the reaction of the working class was a reaction of intense anger and hatred against Fascism, and a widespread spontaneous demand for a united working class front to fight the Fascist enemy.

On the other hand, the policy of British imperialism, which the Labour Party has invariably reflected, was to utilise the victory of Fascism in Germany in order to develop the anti-Soviet front and prepare a war of intervention.

How to combine these two opposites, and to divert the working class anti-Fascist feeling into channels of the anti-Soviet campaign?

This was the problem which, in fact, faced the central leadership of the Labour party.



The Labour Party leadership found their characteristic solution of this problem, and they found it directly from the arsenal of the Labour Party programme.

In the face of the challenge of Fascism, and in the face of the demand for the united working class front against Fascism, addressed directly to it by the Communist Party and by the Independent Labour Party, and supported by considerable sections within the Labour Party (Socialist League, "New Clarion," etc., as well as many trade union organisations), the Executive of the Labour Party and the General Council of the Trade Union Congress countered with a manifesto under the slogan:

"Democracy versus Dictatorship! Labour's Call to the People."

What was the significance of this slogan? Its whole significance lay in the substitution of the conceptions "*Working class front*" and "*Fascism*" by the conceptions "*Democracy*" and "*Dictatorship*." This substitution gave the Labour Party leaders free play to deceive the workers and to tie them to the policy of British imperialism.

This slogan aimed at representing the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union to be a power akin (also a dictatorship) to the bloody Fascist dictatorship over the working class. Thus, under the cover of "democratic" phraseology and anti-Fascist demagoguery, in reality the fight was sharpened against the Soviet Union.

*The slogan "Democracy versus Dictatorship" is the conscious device of the Labour Party leadership to transform the working class demand for the struggle against Fascism into the channels of the British imperialist struggle against Communism and against the Soviet Union.*

The character of the manifesto and of the whole campaign which was conducted on its basis made this significance fully clear.

The manifesto was issued on March 25th—that is, at the height of the capitalist anti-Soviet campaign, and of the whole campaign around the trial of the British spies in the Soviet Union.

The manifesto appears to take up the issue of Fascism, only to translate it immediately into the issue of Communism. The

dictatorship of the proletariat and the Fascist dictatorship are identified as forms of "dictatorship." "Communist dictatorship" or "the fear of working class dictatorship" is said to be the cause of the growth of Fascism. "Reaction of the 'Left', is displaced by triumphant reaction of the 'Right.' " The workers are called on to support the Labour Party "against dictators—Fascist or Communist."

The brunt of the manifesto turns against Communism as a small but curious sect. It is noticeable that, while Fascism is referred to directly in the manifesto four times, Communism or Bolshevism is referred to directly seven times.

The widespread campaign which has been organised by the Labour Party throughout the country on this basis bears the same character. Typical is the statement of the Labour Member of Parliament, R.J. Davies, at a trade union conference:

"So long as we have a dictatorship in Russia, Poland, Germany, Italy or elsewhere, the mere fact that they accept dictatorship brings in its train the other things that are happening in both Germany and Russia..... I would not suffer, if I could prevent it, dictatorship of the proletariat any more than the dictatorship of the capitalist class."

A central demonstration was organised at the Albert Hall, addressed by the principal Labour Party and trade union leaders. Of this demonstration a prominent 'Left' Labour representative had to declare in disgust:

"The Labour Party and trade union leaders even turned last week's Albert Hall demonstration more to a protest against Soviet Russia than against the Hitlerite dictatorship." (E.C. Wilkinson at the Distributive Workers' Conference: "New Leader," April 21st 1933.)

The campaign has served in fact two purposes for the Labour Party leaders.

First, it has served to counter the demand for the united front and to sharpen the fight against the rising influence of Communism in the Labour ranks, while concealing the real issue sharply presented by Facism to the working class.

Second—and this is, above all, important at the present point—it has served as a campaign of ideological war preparation against the Soviet Union.

*The slogan "Democracy versus Dictatorship" employed, for instance, by the French Socialists for the ideological justification of the war of imperialist France and its allies against Fascist Germany and Fascist Italy, acquires in England in the mouths of the leaders of the Labour Party, a heightened anti-Soviet flavour. Now it is already the slogan of the future imperialist war against the Soviet Union.*

The greatest crime of the Labour Party and trade union leaders is that they are, at this critical hour, consciously endeavouring through this slogan, to incite the masses against the Soviet Union.

Current Labour propaganda literature already bears the character of the lower types of war propaganda. An example of this is the June issue of the official monthly organ, the "Labour Magazine." This organ bears for its frontispiece a combined setting of four heads—Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Pilsudski. In the text Citrine, Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, notorious for his splitting activities in the unions and for his close relations with the big industrialists, writes of how "the Collectivist State, whether Communist or Fascist" has destroyed the trade unions: "In the Communist Revolution of October, 1917, a similar technique was applied to the trade unions as was used in Italy..... the independent unions were suppressed as Mussolini has suppressed the unions in Italy," etc. This is only a sample of what is being poured out on every side.

In the face of this infamous campaign of the Labour Party leadership, the opposition throughout the ranks of the Labour Party and of the trade unions is growing. Despite the official ban on participation, both the Anti-War Movement and the Anti-Fascist Movement are winning wide and increasing support within the working class organisations. The Anti-War Congress at Bermondsey in March was attended by 1,500 delegates, including 400 from the trade unions (including six National Executives) fifty from local Labour Parties, 110 from Co-operative Guilds, ninety-five from the Independent Labour Party. The Anti-Fascist

Conference in London in May, although organised at shorter notice, united 440 delegates, including seventy from trade union branches, forty-four from local Labour Parties, and ninety from Co-operative Guilds.

The Labour Party and trade union central leadership have met this rising united front campaign by announcing a general "clean up"—that is, wholesale expulsions to destroy the working class united front, and maintain their own war campaigns against Communism and against the Soviet Union.

*If this is the role of the Labour Party and trade union leadership already in time of peace, in time of nominal "friendly" relations with the Soviet Union, it can readily be imagined what their role will be when British imperialism will have let loose the dogs of war.♦*

Against this also the working class must be prepared.

The fight against the menace of war on the Soviet Union cannot but be the fight against the infamous anti-Soviet war propaganda of the Labour Party leadership also, against the whole social-fascist propaganda of "Democracy versus Dictatorship".

## Appendix(xix)

### **The Anti-Soviet Policy Of The British Imperialism And The Protest Movement Of The English Proletariat**

**Harry Pollitt**

The National Government which came to power largely on the basis of its demagogic promises to provide work and wages for all British workers, has not only been unable to fulfil its promise, but every act of its policy has only served to increase the misery of the working masses, as the capitalists have attempted to find a way out of the crisis by their attacks upon the conditions of the working class.

Production does not show an increase in any of the basic industries, unemployment has steadily grown since the National Government came into power. Unparalleled mass misery is to be found everywhere. The large industrial centres, and mining districts are, in very truth, graveyards of capitalism.

So marked is the contrast between the conditions of the workers in the oldest capitalist country in the world, and the conditions obtaining in the Young Soviet Union, that, more and more, is this contrast serving to accentuate the radicalisation of the British working class, and develop a widespread realisation that the solution of the problems facing the workers can only be achieved along the path of the October Revolution.

All the efforts of the British capitalist class to solve the crisis by the usual peaceful methods, *i.e.*, changes in monetary and fiscal policy, lowering of workers' standards, speeding up in the

factories, have not enabled them to regain their lost markets or establish new ones. Therefore this whole policy to-day is one of feverish preparations for new wars and armed intervention against the Soviet Union.

There was never such a period of mass misery on the one hand, and such lavish naval, air and military displays, pageants and tattoos, on the other, as at the present time. The savage cutting down of all forms of expenditure on social service and increased expenditure on armaments; the character of the British "Disarmament" proposals at Geneva, all show the rapacious character of the war policy of the National Government as a burning reality.

But it is relation to the Soviet Union that its war policy has perhaps been more openly expressed. The National Government has encouraged and supported every anti-Soviet manoeuvre and policy that has been sponsored by any imperialist Power. Every tendency to form an anti-Soviet bloc, has been warmly welcomed by the National Government. Any country, following a policy, the result of which may be either concealed intervention, or open war on the Soviet Union, has received the complete endorsement and support of the National Government.

In this connection, its support of the policy of Japanese imperialism has been most marked and consistent. One has only to recall the comments on the events in the Far East of many important capitalist newspapers in Britain about "Japan being a bulwark in the Far East against Bolshevism" and "Japan fighting for civilisation against the barbaric menace in the East." These references are sufficient to indicate the mind of the diehards of the ruling class of Britain. The reception given, for example, to Von Papen's proposal for a bloc against the Soviet Union, When he came into power in Germany in August, 1932; the Four-Power Pact initiated by Mac Donald and Mussolini in Rome in the early months of this year. Alongside these tendencies, of course, is to be noted the significant fact that, in *Parliament*, every encouragement was given to all kinds of insolent questions with reference to the Soviet Union by the diehard Tories. These things all show the strong anti-Soviet campaign being carried through under the

leadership of the Tories, screened by the cloak of the National Government, a campaign which has assumed a stronger character than at any time since the period of armed intervention in 1920.

Then came the Moscow trial of the British engineers and, at once, the hounds of intervention were in full cry. The Tory papers and Tory clubs seethed with indignation at the so-called insult to British citizens, and demands flowed thick and fast from all bourgeois quarters, not only for the breaking of trading relations, but the severance of diplomatic relations. There was never a time, since the intervention period, when the anti-Soviet campaign reached such a strong point as during the period when the British engineers were under arrest and on trial. Day after day this anti-Soviet barrage was kept up. Every newspaper and avenue of public opinion was brought into play to support this campaign, but it had little effect upon the working class. Indeed, as a matter of fact, when the publication of the various interviews was made which had taken place between Comrade Litvinov and Sir Esmond Ovey, the British Ambassador in Moscow, and Comrade Litvinov informed the latter gentleman that "he was not talking to Mexico," it created a delight amongst the working class that it is difficult to recall any other expression having achieved. This expression is now known in every workshop, trade union branch and workers' home in the country. It was realised that it expressed the strength of the Soviet Union and emphasised that there was one socialist country in the world which could speak without any diplomatic language to the oldest and most presumptuous imperialist country in the world.

Of course, it is now a matter of history that the National Government utilised the Moscow trial to put the anti-embargo measure through its packed House of Commons. A Government which had made play of its desire to find work for the unemployed, revealed its real face when, to carry forward its policy of preparing for armed intervention against the Workers' Socialist Fatherland, it deliberately resorted to the weapon of the embargo on trade with the Soviet Union, and placed 60,000 British workers out of work.

At once this Act aroused a storm of protest throughout the working class movement. The Communist Party initiated a big campaign against the embargo. The United Front Agreement reached between the C.P. and the I.L.P. contained an important point on the need for organising the fight against the embargo, and proposed to organise a national campaign for the withdrawal of the Embargo Act. The Friends of the Soviet Union, which had been rapidly growing in influence and strength for a long period, played a very important role in the anti-embargo campaign, which also reflected itself in the composition of the May Day delegation to the Soviet Union, which included a worker from Metro-Vickers.

Meetings, conferences, demonstrations, etc., were organised all over the country. The Friends of the Soviet Union issued a special leaflet for distribution at 105 factories which had either worked on orders for the Soviet Union in the past, or were actually doing so at the time of the embargo. The following extracts will show the character of this leaflet, which had a signal effect in many of the factories, leading to the workers holding meetings and passing resolutions, demanding the withdrawal of the embargo:

“The ‘National’ Government has put an embargo on Soviet imports. In reply, the Soviet Government had stopped all trade with this country. That means millions of pounds worth of orders and business lost to Britain.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“You have worked on Soviet orders. You know that they have kept scores of works and mills open, and given employment to thousands. Now all this has been lost. More must go on the dole. More children must go hungry.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### WHY THE EMBARGO?

“They tell you it is ‘to save the British prisoners in Moscow.’ A LIE! An innocent British girl was hounded to



suicide by the third degree methods of the American police (in the Lindbergh baby case). The British Government did nothing."

\* \* \* \* \*

"They tell you it is 'to stand by innocent men'. A LIE ! Thornton and Macdonald have confessed they were guilty of wrecking plant, bribery and spying ."

\* \* \* \* \*

"They told you 'the sentences are brutal'. A LIE ! Thornton and Macdonald will be able to work at their profession at trade union rates. Every day's work will mean a day's remission. And what about the Meerut prisoners sentenced to ten and twelve years' transportation for the 'crime' of organising the Indian trade union movement?

"Thornton and Macdonald are only a pretext. The capitalist class of this country seize on any pretext for attacking the first workers'republic."

\* \* \* \* \*

"They broke off the Trade Agreement last October. When their spies and wreckers were arrested they broke off trade negotiations. When the sentences were barely announced (not yet confirmed). they imposed the embargo. Thus they carried out their pledge to the big Canadian wheat, timber and fur trusts—and to the British bankers and merchants interested in Canadian business—which was made at Ottawa. The next step will be to break diplomatic relations, a prelude to WAR".

A further letter issued by the Friends of the Soviet Union in 1,00,000 copies also clearly explained the meaning of the British embargo on Russian trade.

"The Government has put an embargo on goods coming from the Soviet Union. None of the chief imports, such as timber, petroleum, butter and grain, are to be allowed into the country."

This means that all exports from Britain to the U.S.S.R. will also stop. Soviet Union, in her own interests, must buy where she can sell. So the Soviet Union have replied to the embargo with a counter-embargo.

*That is to say, trade with the U.S.S.R. amounting to £2,90,00,000 last year, will come to a complete stop.*

## HOW WILL THIS AFFECT YOU?

It will mean *Higher Prices*.

It will mean *More Unemployment*.

It will mean *increased Danger of War*.

## THE EMBARGO MEANS UNEMPLOYMENT

### Example No.I.

More than half of the total exports of British machinery tools go to the Soviet Union. This industry will thus be cut in half. The Government are deliberately throwing thousands of engineers out of work.

### Example No. 2.

Every ton of machinery exported from Britain means more than a ton of steel has been smelted, giving employment to blast furnacemen, steel smelters, etc. To make a ton of steel nearly four tons of coal have to be used, and the mining of the coal means employment for miners. All this work is lost by the embargo.

*The Government is thus throwing tens of thousands of steel workers, engineers, miners and transport workers on the streets.*

The Communist Party issued leaflets, many of our local organisations displayed considerable initiative in getting out special types of leaflets, in accordance to the concrete situation in their localities, which played an important part in the mobilisation of the working class against the embargo.

As a result of the campaign thus started, working class organisations began to adopt resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the embargo, all revealed the growing indignation of the workers.

Up to date, we have record of over 300 such resolutions being adopted, and of course, this excludes those which were sent to the

*Daily Herald*, Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, and these can certainly be recorded in some hundreds. It is interesting to note the character of the organisations which adopted resolutions of protest. For example, the Scottish Trade Union Congress, at its Congress in April, representing all the organised trade unionists in Scotland, passed the following resolution :—

“This Congress registers its emphatic protest against the action of the National Government in placing an embargo on the import of U.S.S.R. products, realising that this means, (1) depriving thousands of workers of employment in this country, (2) it is a deliberate attempt to destroy Socialist development in Russia, (3) it is dictated by the decisions of the Ottawa Conference rather than by the trial of the British engineers.

“Congress therefore pledges itself to work and fight for the raising of the embargo as speedily as possible.”

The following trades councils also adopted similar solutions: Manchester and Salford Trades Council; Deptford; Croydon; Newcastle; Grangemouth; Bradford; Middlesbrough ; Liverpool; West Ham ; Leicester; and Farnsworth.

In the trade union branches, resolutions against the embargo were passed by the following organisations: Textile Workers, Boilermakers, Amalgamated Society of Wood workers, Furnishing Trades Association, Transport and General Workers' Union, including Busmen and Dockers, the National Union of Railwaymen, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engine drivers and Firemen, the Lightermen's Union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the Building Trades Federation, Electrical Trade Union, General and Municipal Workers' Union, the National Society of Painters, Chemical Workers' Union, the National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, representing the whole membership organised in the amalgamated Engineering Union, Shop Assistants, Clerical Workers, Distributive Workers.

In addition, the following organisations at various meetings had resolutions adopted of a similar character: National Unemployed Workers' Movement, I.L.P., Labour Party, Communist Party, Friends of the Soviet Union, Co-operative Guilds, Labour

Women's Guilds, the Congress of the Co-operative Union, and at mass meetings all over the country similar resolutions of protest were recorded.

The Women's Co-operative Guilds Jubilee Congress, attended by over 1,600 delegates from every part of Britain have unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the embargo "as a step nearer to war."

It is a very significant fact that an analysis of the whole of the resolutions shows that the embargo is recognised as a step towards armed intervention and war.

It is interesting to note that in certain bourgeois circles hostility was manifested to the breaking of the trade agreement and important town councils, like Cardiff and Oldham, went on record against it, and in other areas, local chambers of commerce demand the withdrawal of the embargo.

It is very significant, in connection with the campaign of the British working class against the embargo, that the stronger the diehards organised their campaign, the stronger became the working class reply. But, as usual, the reformists of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress helped the diehards in their demand for the release of the British engineers, as can be seen in the following telegram, which was sent to the Soviet Government by the Joint Council of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress:

"British organised labour, industrial and political, appeals to the Soviet Government for the immediate release of fellow countrymen in the interests of friendly relations between Great Britain and Russia." (Signed) Walter M. Citrine, Arthur Henderson, George Lansbury.

But this infamous telegram did not represent the opinions of the British working class. Their opinions are recorded in resolutions which were immediately adopted on the publication of the telegram of the Joint Council of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. For example, the Nottingham Trades council declared:

"This meeting raised strong objections to the actions of the National Joint Council in asking for the release of the British

engineers, guilty of attempting to ruin the work of Socialist construction.

"This action misrepresents the opinion of the organised workers.

"If Thornton and Macdonald were released, it would serve to encourage parties interested in destroying workers' dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. We uphold the findings of the Soviet court."

The Newcastle Labour Party declared:

"That this delegate meeting entirely dissociates itself from the decision of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress requesting the release of the British prisoners in Moscow, who were charged and found guilty of wrecking and sabotaging socialist construction in Soviet Russia."

"We declare that such enemies against Socialism in any country are deserving of the utmost punishment. In endorsing such acts, the Executive Committee does not reflect the general membership."

These are the expressions of opinion which can be accurately stated to reflect the real opinions of the workers of Britain. In point of fact, it would be impossible to discover anyone in any factory, trade union branch, or travelling in bus, tram or tube, during the proceedings of the Moscow trial, who heard British workers defend the British engineers. On the contrary, it was common to hear such expressions as : "They're guilty all right," or "The Soviet Government would not dare to have arrested these engineers unless they had the goods on them." And when the trial itself began, and the concrete facts of the wrecking activities were published, then the class instinct of the British workers was strongly displayed. So much so, that when the actual sentences became known, the general impression in working class circles was that the British engineers had got off very lightly, and in many meetings questions were asked by the workers, in which they protested against the light sentences that had been inflicted. On many, many occasions, workers very pointedly asked why

"There had been any differentiation made between the sentences of the Russian and British cluprits."

There can be no doubt that the strength of the working class fight against the embargo has made itself felt.

The Communist Party has set itself the aim of still more intensifying the anti-embargo campaign, so as to bring in wider circles of the working class, and to get the campaign organised to take a more definite and concrete form. Particularly significant is the intensification of the struggle in the localities and districts, so that the opposition to the policy of the embargo and armed intervention can be brought home to every section of the ruling class and their supporters.

District conferences are being organised by the Friends of the Soviet Union. The delegation of workers who visited the Soviet Union in connection with the First of May celebrations, are already engaged in a wide reporting campaign, which is receiving the greatest attention and support.

In London on July 30th, 1933, there is to take place a great national anti-war demonstration. In this demonstration the question of the fight against the embargo was to occupy a prominent place.

After this article had already been written, it became known that the undertaking of the British Government of the embargo on imports of Soviet goods had ended in failure. The Government found itself compelled to raise the embargo, and to propose the resumption of negotiations for the conclusion of a new trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. The causes of the retreat of the British Government are three-fold. In the first place, the Soviet power exhibited in this conflict a stability and firmness which was not anticipated by the diehards, who had already miscalculated in regard to the Soviet power more than once. In the second place, the British bourgeoisie suffered a much greater loss as a result of the embargo to which the Soviet power responded by counter-measures, than did the Soviet power. In the circumstances of the sharpening economic war between Great Britain and the U.S.A., and also that between Great Britain and Japan, business circles in Britain began to increasingly express their

dissatisfaction at the additional difficulties created (against) their trade by the embargo. In the third place, and this is of decisive importance, the protest of the mass of British workers against the embargo increased continuously.

The Communist Party has done, and will do, everything possible to assist in the development of this broad movement of working class protest. There have been many weaknesses in the campaign, such as not reacting quickly enough to the menace offered by the Tory diehards, and perhaps in not explaining the significance of the breaking of the trade agreement with the actual preparations for armed intervention, and in not having harnessed the resolutions of protest into more concrete forms of mass action.

The question of the embargo has now been removed by the British Government itself. But this by no means removes the question of the organisation by the British Government of intervention against the U.S.S.R.

The Four-Power Pact, which is directed against the Soviet Union; the friendship and admiration which is being expressed in many official quarters for the bloody regime of Hitler; are also important indications that the ruling class will give full support to all those plans of Hitler's, designed for the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and the giving of new territory to Germany at her expense. Significant enough, in this respect, was the attempt made by the more responsible capitalist newspapers to minimise and disguise the significance of the demand made by Hugenburg, the representative of Hitler at the World Economic Conference, for a more active policy against the Soviet Union, and particularly its claims for the seizure of Soviet territory.

The British workers understand the international significance of the policy of the fight for peace conducted by the Soviet Union. *They note with pride and enthusiasm that the toilers of the Soviet Union utilise every day of the breathing space to work upon the solution of the great historical task of building the Socialist society. In the fact of the conclusion by the Soviet Union of pacts of non-aggression with a series of countries they perceive, above all, her growing strength.*

The speech of Comrade Litvinov at the World Economic Conference, in spite of its boycott in the capitalist Press, is reaching larger and larger sections of workers, and the contrast between the positive and constructive character of this speech and those of delegates of capitalist countries, in which is sharply revealed the differences that exist between the dying capitalist world and the advancing world of Socialism, has made a very deep impression.

This amazing contrast between the country which was anxious to place orders for millions of pounds worth of goods, as compared to all the capitalist countries who, as a result of the impoverishment of the mass, could not find markets for their goods, has been very quickly reacted to by the British working class.

Perhaps it would be as well to close this article with two quotations, because they indicate, not only the desire of the British working class for the resumption of full and unconditional trading relations with the Soviet Union, but are of more deeper revolutionary significance. They are a real appreciation of what the Soviet Union means to the working class not only in Britain, but all over the world. In the declaration of the First of May delegation on its return to Britain, we read:

"The idea sedulously circulated by the Press that the (Metropolitan-Vickers) trial was held for the purpose of diverting attention from the alleged economic failure of the Soviet policy, we can only characterise as arrant nonsense."

\* \* \*

"The success of the Five-Year Plan is plain for all to see. This is a fact of which every Soviet citizen and every unbiassed visitor to the U.S.S.R. is aware.

\* \* \*

"We are satisfied that in the Soviet Union the real power resides in the hands of the workers— politically, culturally, economically and socially.

\* \* \*



“We shall work to build up the organisation of a fighting united front of the working class under a militant leadership for the purpose of transforming the defensive struggles of the workers into a struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a Soviet Britain.”

And the quotation from the resolution adopted at a meeting of London Boilermakers where it declared:

“We send greetings to our Russian comrades and pledge ourselves to fight against this war policy of the National Government and for the fullest possible trading relations between Britain and the Soviet Union.”

These are the expressions of opinion that represent the indissoluble bonds of international class solidarity between the Russian and British workers which will enable them jointly to overcome all their class enemies.

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